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METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY . . . . . BY

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TO MY WIFE

PREFACE

THE purpose of this little book is the simple though necessary one of directing fresh attention to the value and importance of the study of the Bible itself as distinct from, or at least prior to, the study of books about the Bible. It is only too possible to know a great deal about the Bible and yet to know very little of the contents of the Bible. These chapters are intended to suggest methods of mastering the subject-matter of the Word of God, its facts and doctrines. Many more books about the Bible, books of great value, could easily have been suggested, but this might have diverted attention from the simple object of this book, the first-hand study of the Scripture.

It is hoped that Christian workers of our Churches may find herein some suggestions for a fuller knowledge of their handbook of service and for a more efficient use of their weapon of warfare, the English Bible. And if anything is found helpful to theological students, and those whose ministry has just commenced, the purpose of these papers will be more

than realised. There can be no doubt that the most powerful and fruitful ministry will ever be the ministry of those who are, like Apollos, "mighty in the Scriptures." A beloved friend, a well-known and honoured dignitary of the Church of England, who most kindly read through these chapters before publication, recently wrote to me: "Bible-teaching sermons never grow stale; the King honours His sign-manual."

There is of course no attempt at completeness in the plan of this book. There are other methods of Bible study besides those found here, while even these may be developed in additional directions. All that is hoped is, that they may be found suggestive, and prove incentives to further study. These hints are the assimilation of study and reading from student days onwards, for the last twenty years, and represent a wide and varied indebtedness to many books, papers, and lectures. They have been delivered in substance as lectures in Oxford and London, and are now reprinted with revision from the *Life of Faith*. They are sent forth with prayer and hope, and with an ever-deepening conviction that for mature Christian life, strong character and fruitful service, nothing can possibly compare with, or make up for, daily definite study of and meditation on the Word of God.

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METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

CHAPTER I

THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE

THE Bible is the Word of God, the revelation of His Will to man. It follows that we ought to know this revelation, and heed its message. Knowledge demands study, earnest, faithful, patient, constant, and it is to this subject we address ourselves, with the purpose of suggesting methods of becoming better acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures.

The value of an adequate knowledge of the Bible is evident. There is intellectual profit in its information and instruction. There is moral profit in its guidance and warning. There is spiritual profit in its doctrinal and experimental truth.

We need, too, to be equipped by the Scriptures against sacerdotal excess and rationalistic defect, and in its revelation of grace and truth to obtain assurance of salvation and derive strength for service.

Knowledge, however, presupposes very much more than reading ; it calls for *study*. And not study only, but a genuine application of mind, heart and conscience to the substance and teaching of Holy Writ. We ought to realise the need and importance of as thorough and detailed knowledge of the Scriptures as our time and capacity will afford. Bible study involves hard work, because it demands *thought*. It cannot be accomplished by reading only. Bible reading is not Bible study.

It is also much easier to read books about the Bible, and it makes far less demand on our time and thought, than to study the Bible for ourselves. But the latter is at once the most essential and most profitable of our duties.

In these chapters it is proposed to suggest certain methods of study, starting with a general view of the Bible as a whole, and descending through sections and portions to the study of verses and words. In this way it will be possible to gain some idea of the fulness and variety of Bible study, and of the great enjoyment of looking at the Word of God from different standpoints.

The Variety of the Bible.

Think of the variety of *contents*—history, theology, philosophy, poetry, counsel, aspiration, prediction. Consider the variety of *authorship*—prophet, priest,

king, annalist, apostle, evangelist. Note the variety of *circumstances*—differences of time (Moses to St John), place, country, purpose, destination. There are sixty-six books, the work of at least thirty-six authors, and covering sixteen centuries.

Our use of the Bible as one book necessarily tends to make us forget that it is not only one book, but a library, "the Divine library," with manifold variety and glory.

The Unity of the Bible.

This unity is the complement of the foregoing. The Bible, though varied, is yet one, amid all its differences of time, place, and purpose, and possesses one predominant idea. The Old Testament is the product of one country, stretching over a long period of time. The New Testament is the product of several countries, but extending over a short time. The Old is to the New as the foundation to the structure, and the New to the Old as the building to the basis. The God of Genesis and Matthew is the same, only with the two complementary aspects of transcendence and immanence. The man of Genesis and Matthew is the same, needing God and His grace. In the Old Testament we have God in Himself as supreme, and man in himself as sinner. In the New Testament we have God in Christ as Saviour, and

man in Christ as saved. "In the Old the New is concealed (latent), and in the New the Old is revealed (patent)." The Old Testament is a revelation of outward forms developing inward principles. The New is a revelation of inward principles developing outward forms. The Old Testament is a preparation of Christ for the Church, and the Church for Christ. The New is a revelation of Christ to the Church, and through the Church to the world.

Christ is the key to the whole Bible, and it is He who gives it its spiritual and historical unity. The following sevenfold unity, covering the whole Bible, has been suggested, and is well worth consideration:

1. Genesis to Deuteronomy—*Revelation.*
2. Joshua to Esther—*Preparation.*
3. Job to Song of Solomon—*Aspiration.*
4. Isaiah to Malachi—*Expectation.*
5. Matthew to John—*Manifestation.*
6. Acts to Epistles—*Realisation.*
7. Revelation—*Culmination.*

Of course these are only to be understood quite generally, but they are sufficiently accurate to reveal the essential unity.

The two elements of marvellous variety and still more marvellous unity are complementary truths which will convey their own deep impressions of the Divine origin and inspiration to every earnest

thinker. How is it possible that sixty-six books, written almost independently of one another, extending over nearly two thousand years, and under all possible variety of circumstance, can have nothing in any part that contradicts what is found elsewhere? Human skill could not effect it. "This thing is from Me," saith the Lord.

With such a wonderful unity existing in the Divine Library of sixty-six books, it is not surprising to find in it another remarkable feature which follows from the variety and unity already considered.

The Symmetry of the Bible.

This symmetry is characteristic both of its literary structure and of its spiritual teaching. The shortest expression of it is that in the Old Testament we have Moses and the Prophets, and in the New Testament Christ and His Apostles. Amplifying this, we notice that both the Old and New Testaments are capable of a simple fivefold division:

Old Testament.	*New Testament.*
Pentateuch (5).	Gospels (4).
Historical Books (12).	Acts (1).
Poetical Books (5).	Pauline Epistles (14).
Major Prophets (5).	General Epistles (7).
Minor Prophets (12).	Revelation (1).

Extending this somewhat further, we may notice

that the Pentateuch is to the Old Testament what the Gospels are to the New, the foundation on which all else rests, and it may be regarded as generally correct to say that the Pentateuch and Gospels are books of the Revelation of God to man, and that the rest of the Old and New Testaments are books of the Realisation of that Revelation in man. Consider this as regards the Old Testament in tabular form :—

1. Revelation. (Pentateuch.) God to His People.
2. Realisation. (Rest of O. T.) God in His People.
   (*a*) In Outward Expression. Historical books.
   (*b*) In Inward Experience. Poetical books.
   (*c*) In Onward Expectation. Prophetical books.

The above is only the shortest possible statement to show clearly the symmetry; but it could be amplified under each division to give more definite indications of the same beauty. For example, it has been pointed out that in the poetical books we have three attitudes or aspects of life—Devotion (Psalms), Wisdom (Job, Prov., Eccl.), and Fellowship (Solomon's Song); and that in the three wisdom books we have—"Piety without prosperity" (Job), "Piety and prosperity" (Prov.), and "Prosperity without piety" (Eccl.). These are only two instances of the fulness and beauty of the Old Testament revelation.

Taking the New Testament in the same way, we have—

1. Revelation. (Gospels.) Christ to His Church.
2. Realisation. (Rest of N. T.) Christ in His Church.
   (*a*) In Outward Expression. (History) Acts.
   (*b*) In Inward Experience. (Doctrine) Epistles.
   (*c*) In Onward Expectation. (Prophecy) Revelation.

These, again, may be easily amplified so as to reveal further beauties, as, for example, in the various aspects of Christ's person seen in the Epistles, or the various phases of Christian truth and life.

Another way of looking at this subject is to think of the two Testaments as two buildings, and then to consider—

1. The Historical Foundation. (Past.)
   (*a*) O. T. Pentateuch and Historical.
   (*b*) N. T. Gospels and Acts.
2. The Spiritual Construction. (Present.)
   (*a*) O. T. Poetical Books.
   (*b*) N. T. Epistles.
3. The Prophetic Completion. (Future.)
   (*a*) O. T. Prophets.
   (*b*) N. T. Revelation.

Again, we may regard the Old and New Testaments as complementary, and take as their

keywords respectively, Preparation and Revelation.

1. Old Testament. Preparation—
   (*a*) For Christ.
      (1) In History.
      (2) In Type.
      (3) In Prophecy.
   (*b*) For the Church.
      (1) In the Need of Salvation.
      (2) In the Need of Worship.
      (3) In the Need of Obedience.
2. New Testament. Revelation—
   (*a*) Of Christ.
      (1) In His Person.
      (2) In His Work.
      (3) In His Kingdom.
   (*b*) Of the Church.
      (1) In its Life.
      (2) In its Service.
      (3) In its Hope.

The foregoing considerations are only suggestive and indicative of further possibilities. Valuable help will be found in Dr. Monro Gibson's little book on *The Unity and Symmetry of the Bible* (Hodder & Stoughton), and in Dr. Dunning's *Normal Studies* (Sunday School Union).

It is impossible to over-estimate the value of this broad outlook on the Bible as a whole. It keeps

us from narrowness of view and "scrappiness" of knowledge. It serves moreover to inspires us with the glory, the greatness and the grandeur of God's Revelation in Christ and of His Purposes of Redemption in Christ. Let us take large views of the Word of God, and then "new beauties" we shall see and "still increasing light."

CHAPTER II

THE OLD TESTAMENT

FROM the consideration of the Bible as a whole we naturally pass to the study of the Old Testament. The Bible has been given to us in two parts, both of which are essential and inseparable. The Old Testament is to the New as the foundation to the building.

The Old Testament is almost entirely an historical record of God's preparation for the redemption of the world, and the preparation as there seen is two-fold—the preparation of the Messiah for the people, and of the people for the Messiah. It is consequently of the utmost importance that we know thoroughly the facts of the history at each stage of the development, for as nothing has been recorded without purpose, the fuller our knowledge the deeper will be our appreciation of the record and meaning of God's revelation. Let us not think, therefore, that these historical facts and details are dry and unnecessary, for it is only on a foundation of these

facts that we can build our edifice of spiritual teaching.

How shall we best acquire a general knowledge of Old Testament history? If we follow solely the order of our Bible, we shall find it difficult to gain a chronological and orderly view of the course of events. What we need is some historical guide by means of which we may perceive the actual trend of events. We therefore propose to give a summary of the Old Testament as a guide to its careful and detailed study.

The Old Testament however is not all history. It contains records of individual life and experience which throw light on the history, and must be read side by side with it. We see this illustrated in English history, where we have records of facts, and also works like those of Chaucer, Wycliffe, Shakespeare, Spencer, Milton and others, which throw great light on the actual life of the times in which the writers lived. So in the Old Testament we have the prophetical and poetical books, which should be read together with the historical books to whose times they refer. We shall therefore divide the Old Testament into eight sections, and distinguish the particular books as those of history and illustration.

THE CONTENTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

1. Introduction. From the Creation to the Call of Abram. Genesis i.–xi.

2. The Age of the Patriarchs.
   (*a*) History. Genesis xii.–l.
   (*b*) Illustration. Job.

3. The Formation of the Nation of Israel.
   (*a*) History. Exodus and Numbers.
   (*b*) Illustration. Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

4. Conquest of, and Settlement in, Canaan.
   (*a*) History. Joshua; Judges i.–xvi.; 1 Samuel i.–vii.
   (*b*) Illustration. Ruth and Judges xvii.–xxi.

5. The Kingdom undivided.
   (*a*) History. 1 Samuel viii.–xxxi.; 2 Samuel and 1 Kings i.–xi.; 1 Chronicles.
   (*b*) Illustration. Psalms i.–xc.; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; Solomon's Song.

6. The Kingdom divided.
   (*a*) History. 1 Kings xii.–xxii.; 2 Kings; 2 Chronicles.
   (*b*) Illustration. The Prophets and most of the later Psalms. Thus:—
      (1) Mainly concerned with Israel (Northern): Jonah, Amos, Hosea.

(2) Mainly Judah (early); Joel, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum.

(3) Mainly Judah (late); Zephaniah, Habakkuk, part of Jeremiah.

7. The Captivity.

(*a*) History. Parts of Jeremiah and Ezekiel; Daniel i.–vi.

(*b*) Illustration. Parts of Jeremiah and Ezekiel; Obadiah; Daniel vii.–xii.

8. The Restoration.

(*a*) History. Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther.

(*b*) Illustration. Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi; and some later Psalms.

The above sketch in the last four sections is of course only approximately correct, because of the impossibility of fixing absolutely the dates of many of the psalms and of some of the prophets. The arrangement now suggested is not according to the views of many modern scholars, but it may not be necessarily incorrect on that account. It follows the lines of a somewhat older scholarship, which is at least still worthy of being heard. For those who wish to take up this study in detail, two books may be recommended; one is *The Bible Reader's Chart*, by W. C. Fletcher (Bryan & Co., Ship Street, Oxford, 6*d*.), a very useful little compilation; the other is *Clews to Holy Writ*, by Miss Petrie (Hodder & Stoughton), which gives a plan for a consecutive

reading of the whole Bible in chronological order. Differences of detail must necessarily arise in such a study, but there is very little variation in the main outline, and there is no doubt of its importance.

When we have thus mastered the facts of the Old Testament, we naturally begin to inquire as to the spiritual teaching of this library of history. This leads us to consider—

The Teaching of the Old Testament.

One word sums up all—CHRIST. But let us see how this comes to pass. We will imagine a stranger with an Old Testament only (that is, without the New Testament) opening at Genesis i., and reading verse by verse. Soon he comes to chapter iii., with its promise of Someone coming. He reads on and finds a repetition with amplification in chapters xii., xvii., xxii. and xlix. Still he reads, and finds traces of the same promise in almost every book ; until as he reads from Isaiah onwards the very fulness of prophecy appears. But he comes to Malachi iv., and the promises have not been realised. The reader has now become conscious that the Old Testament is—

1. A Book of Unfulfilled Prophecies.

He then turns back and starts again, and soon is conscious of something strange in Genesis iv. —sacrifice, offering. He wonders what can be the use of sacrificing ; what can be the meaning of

offering the life of an animal. He notices it again in chapters ix., xii. and xxii.; still more clearly in Exodus, until in Leviticus there is an entire organisation of sacrifices, offerings, rites and ceremonies. He sees them referred to again and again, with very little explanation of their real meaning, until once more he reaches Malachi iv. without the light he needs. He is now conscious that the Old Testament is also—

2. A Book of Unexplained Ceremonies.

Once more the reader recurs to Genesis, and it is not long before he is conscious of another great fact —the expression of desire for God and satisfaction on the part of man. He reads of this in chapters iv., v., xv., xxviii. and xlix., then throughout the rest of the history, but most of all in Job, Psalms and the Prophets. From time to time man's heart cries out for the living God, and for the blessings God has promised. But though there is great, there is not perfect, satisfaction; the heart is ever longing and the soul ever desiring, until the book closes in Malachi iv. without this complete realisation, and our reader becomes conscious of yet another fact, that the Old Testament is—

3. A Book of Unsatisfied Longings.

These are the three threads running through it, making it by itself an incomplete book. It ought to be studied from this standpoint, and with this per-

spective, if it is to be rightly understood. Only thus will it be appreciated as the foundation of the New Testament, and the necessary preparation for all that is found in the latter book.

And we will imagine that our stranger (as above) has now given to him a New Testament. As he begins to read he finds there the very things he has failed to discover in the Old Testament. On the very first page he reads: "That it might be fulfilled," and soon he realises that

(1) Jesus the Prophet fulfils (in His Life) the prophecies.

(2) Jesus the Priest explains (in His Death) the ceremonies; and

(3) Jesus the King satisfies (in His Resurrection) the longings.

"Jesus my Prophet, Priest and King," is thus the key of the lock, the perfect explanation of the Old Testament revelation, and the justification of everything contained therein. Let us then master the contents of the Old Testament, meditate on its teaching, and manifest its message in our life and service.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW TESTAMENT

As we have already seen, the New Testament is to the Old as a building to a foundation ; it is the completion and crown of all that had been foretold and provided. And as with the Old Testament, so with the New, Christ is the subject and substance of it all.

The method of mastering the New Testament must be very similar to that employed in the Old Testament, by reason of its structure being also historical. It is based upon facts, and these facts must be known if we would rightly profit by the teaching. It cannot be stated too clearly or emphasised too frequently that no fact or incident of the Bible is without some bearing on the revelation of God contained in the Scriptures. Following the same general plan as before, we will consider first the history and then the teaching.

The Contents of the New Testament.

In the New Testament also, the order of the Authorised Version is not chronological, and we shall

therefore divide the contents into eight sections, for the purpose of studying it in historical sequence as closely as possible. We shall find that here too we have books of fact and of illustration.

1. The Life of our Lord. The Gospels. Four characteristic pictures of the one Saviour. They should be studied separately, and then together, under the guidance of a good harmony. A summary of the harmony is found in most Teachers' Bibles, but a harmony with the full text is of course to be preferred. A good cheap one on the Authorised Version is Fuller's (S. P. C. K., 1*s.* 6*d.*), which is careful and accurate, and adequate for all ordinary purposes. The best on the Revised Version is the American one of Stevens & Burton (Gay & Bird, 6*s.*).

2. The Early Church.

(*a*) History. Acts i.–xii.

(*b*) Illustration. Epistle of St. James.

Study carefully the beginnings of the Church, and see illustrations in the Epistle of the type of its Christianity.

3. St. Paul's First Journey.

(*a*) History. Acts xiii. and xiv.

(*b*) Illustration. Galatians.

The first missionary work proper is recorded in the Acts, and the Epistle was (almost certainly) written to those in Asia Minor evangelised on this journey.

4. St. Paul's Second Journey.
   (*a*) History. Acts xv. 1–xviii. 21.
   (*b*) Illustration. 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
5. St. Paul's Third Journey.
   (*a*) History. Acts xviii. 22–xxi. 17.
   (*b*) Illustration. 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans.

Galatians appears here again because it illustrates the *thoughts* then rife in St. Paul's mind, which are so thoroughly dealt with in Romans.

6. St. Paul's Captivity.
   (*a*) History. Acts xxi. 18–xxviii. 31.
   (*b*) Illustration. Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, Philippians.
7. St. Paul's (probable) Release and Second Imprisonment.
   (*a*) History. } Hebrews, 1 Timothy.
   (*b*) Illustration. } Titus, 2 Timothy.
8. Closing Years of First Century.
   (*a*) A.D. 70–85. Revelation, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude.
   (*b*) A.D. 85–100. 2, 3, and 1 John.

For valuable handbooks to the life and work of St. Paul, consult Findlay's *Epistles of St. Paul* (2*s.* 6*d.*) and Stalker's *Life of St. Paul* (1*s.* 6*d.*). But first let the general facts be mastered from the Bible only. Miss Petrie's *Clews to Holy Writ* covers the New Testament as well as the Old.

The Teaching of the New Testament.

It is very important to study this carefully, for it is full of spiritual profit. There is a beautiful progress of thought from first to last. Note the different aspect in each division and subdivision.

1. The Person of Christ. (Biographical.) The Gospels.
   - (*a*) Working out Salvation.
   - (*b*) Providing materials for faith. John xx. 31.
   - (*c*) Founding a Church in the world.
2. The Preaching of Christ. (Historical.) Acts.
   - (*a*) Offering Salvation.
   - (*b*) Affording opportunities for faith.
   - (*c*) Gathering out a Church from the world.
3. The People of Christ. (Practical.) The Epistles.
   - (*a*) Manifesting Salvation.
   - (*b*) Showing results of faith.
   - (*c*) Dwelling in the Church for the world.
4. The Providence of Christ. (Prophetical.) Revelation.
   - (*a*) Completing Salvation.
   - (*b*) Bestowing rewards of faith.
   - (*c*) Ruling over the Church and the world.

For this phase of Bible study there is a book, a classic on the subject, Bernard's *Progress of*

Doctrine in the New Testament, which is one of the books indispensable to all Christians.

It will be seen that Christ is the warp and woof of the New Testament. He is its centre, its lines, its circumference. Christ is the Prophet: let us hear Him; the Priest: let us accept Him; the King: let us obey Him.

CHAPTER IV

BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

After obtaining a view of the Bible as a whole, and of its two great divisions, it is necessary to descend to detailed study of the books that compose the Testaments. The Bible, as we have seen, is not only a book ; it is a library, a collection of sixty-six books, each originally separate from the rest.

It is obvious that we cannot deal with every book, but can only indicate by specimen illustrations how this method of study may be attempted. The first point is to gain as full a knowledge as possible of the contents of the book, to make sure that we know the leading names and events and the main substance. Then from the contents we can proceed to consider the teaching, its purpose, place, and power. We will take a few of the more important books of the Old Testament and see what can be done by this method.

Genesis.

First of all, we must read it through and get a general idea. It is advisable to do this, if possible,

at one sitting, and to note the impression of unity created. The Bible suffers much from our partial and fragmentary use of it. As we read on through Genesis we cannot help noticing a frequently recurring phrase: "These are the generations," or "the book of the generations." This occurs ten times. (We do not give the references, because we wish to incite to personal *study and search*.) As we discover these we are made conscious that our book of Genesis is mainly a compilation of family records, these being the chief sources of the writer's information. The records, however, have a deep meaning in thus being used. We have no biography or history proper, but biographical and historical incidents utilised under Divine guidance for a spiritual purpose. This purpose emerges as we read on and study. We see that ch. i. 1 is really a key to the book. It is a book of origins, of the *genesis* of things—the origin of creation, man, the Sabbath, marriage, sin, grace, races, the chosen people. And the family records are utilised to illustrate God's plan in redeeming mankind through one people, one tribe, one family.

But as we read and study further we are impressed with the *method* of the book. To appreciate this, let us put ourselves at Abraham's side and look backward and forward. On the one hand we trace him in his ancestors back to Adam; on the other we trace him in his descendants on to Egypt. The book is

true to its manifest design to give us the *geneses* or beginnings of things. Even the apparent turns and new starts of the book, its divergences and retracings, are in accord with its structural principle.

Its *proportions* show the same design. Out of fifty chapters, thirty-nine are devoted to Abraham and his family, while only eleven are given to the rest of the great facts from Creation to the time of Abraham's father. Everything in it seems to be governed by the one great law and principle of "beginnings," origins, *geneses*, in the development of God's purposes of redemptive love and grace.

We must then proceed to study these ten sections, to master the facts associated with them, and to note the growth of the history as it starts with Adam, spreads out into the race, contracts again into Abraham, only to develop again into Israel in Egypt ready for the Exodus recorded in the second book of the Old Testament.

We have dwelt longer on Genesis than we can on others, because of its importance as the first book of Revelation, and in some respects the key to the whole Bible.

Exodus.

This can best be studied and mastered by means of the following brief outline :—

(1) History : Egypt to Sinai. Chapters i.–xviii.

(2) General laws and solemn entrance into covenant. Chapters xix.–xxiv.

(3) Directions for the tabernacle and worship. Chapters xxv. to xl.

Leviticus.

Consider this as follows, and read it in the light of the Epistle to the Hebrews :—

(1) The offerings. Chapters i.–vii.

(2) The priesthood. Chapters viii.–x.

(3) Cleanness and uncleanness. Chapters xi.–xvi.

(4) Laws of holiness. Chapters xvii.–xxii.

(5) The feasts. Chapter xxiii.

(6) General laws. Chapters xxiv.–xxvii.

Deuteronomy.

This book (" the Second Law ") is of great interest and importance, and will yield profitable study under the guidance of this outline :—

(1) Recital of God's goodness. Chapters i.–iv.

(2) Review of the law for the new generation at close of the forty years. Chapters v.–xxvi.

(3) Renewal of the covenant with God. Chapters xxvii.–xxx.

(4) Closing scenes in the life of Moses. Chapters xxxi.–xxxiv.

Samuel.

Our present books of Samuel were originally one book, without a break, and when regarded as such

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they afford an excellent illustration of the purpose and method of Bible history, which is not to write history in full, but to write it with a definite object, and to include only what is necessary for the accomplishment of that end. Look at the books before us, and notice how David is the predominant character, everything else leading up to him. Samuel and Saul are brought before us necessarily as stages of the transition from the theocracy to the monarchy. But we see how slight is the record concerning them as compared with the fulness about David.

Here is an outline from Professor Kirkpatrick's volume on Samuel in the Cambridge Bible for Schools, which shows the course of the book and the plan of its contents ;—

(1) Close of the Theocracy. 1 Sam. i.–vii.

(2) Foundation of Monarchy. Chapters viii.–xxxi.

(3) David's reign over Judah only. 2 Sam. i.–iv.

(4) David's reign over all Israel. Chapters v.–xxiv.

This outline, with its symmetrical threefold subdivision in each case, clearly reveals the Davidic purpose of the whole, for David appears as early as ch. xvi. of 1 Samuel. David was God's choice, and would have been the first king but for the people's self-will.

Kings and Chronicles.

Here we have another instance of the religious purpose of the Biblical history. The larger space

devoted to several monarchs shows the importance of these reigns from the point of view of religion and God's Kingdom. There are *six* monarchs, whose reigns are like pivots on which the religious history turns. These should be discovered and their precise importance considered.

On the other hand, it is full of significance that reigns which, to a secular historian, would have seemed of the greatest importance, are very summarily disposed of. The most striking instance of this is in the long and prosperous reign of Jeroboam the Second, which is dismissed in two or three verses. (2 Kings xiv.)

It is not so easy to analyse these books. Perhaps the contents are best studied under the names of the kings recorded, using Chronicles as supplementary to Kings. Both Kings and Chronicles are records of history from the religious standpoint, though the precise aspect in each is different. Kings is essentially prophetical, the work of a prophet (perhaps Jeremiah). Chronicles is priestly, or Levitical, the work of a priest or Levite (perhaps Ezra). Chronicles goes over much the same ground as Kings, but with the one object of showing to those who had returned from captivity the former glory of the Temple, and the present necessity of it and its worship for their national life.

The Book of Job.

There seems to be a partiality in the Old Testament for a fivefold treatment of several books, following, perhaps, the well-known fivefold division of the Law ("Pentateuch" or five volumes). Consider the following instance of it :—

1. Chapters i.–iii. Introduction.
2. Chapters iv.–xxxi. Job and his three friends.
3. Chapters xxxii.–xxxvii. Job and Elihu.
4. Chapters xxxviii.–xli. Interposition of God.
5. Chapter xlii. Conclusion.

Guided by this outline, the book should be read (by all means in the Revised Version) at one sitting, so as to obtain a clear view of the thought as a whole. We ought to be able to think our way through this book generally, and thereby to make out its theme and the treatment of it. What is the theme ? Is it not the great problem of suffering in relation to the people of God, how and whence it comes, why permitted, and what message it brings from God ? In the light of this we can see the various standpoints—Satan's, Job's, the friends', Elihu's, and God's—with the blessed conclusion of the whole matter. Each standpoint is clearly marked, and makes its own definite contribution to the whole. If this book is mastered and read together with other portions of Scripture, such as Psalms xxxvii.

and lxxiii. and Hebrews xii., much light will be cast on some of the gravest problems of life.

The Psalms.

The great book of "the praises of Israel." They are man's inspired response to God's Divine revelation, and are almost as acceptable to-day in their entirety as when they were first uttered, because, underlying all circumstances and changes, the relation of the believer to his God is ever much the same. Here again we have a clearly defined fivefold division as is seen in the Revised Version. The close of each is marked by a *doxology*, until at length the last psalm is all doxology.

1. Book 1. Psalms i.–xli.
2. Book 2. Psalms xlii.–lxxii.
3. Book 3. Psalms lxxiii.–lxxxix.
4. Book 4. Psalms xc.–cv.
5. Book 5. Psalms cvi.–cl.

A careful study will yield the following among other results. (1) The differences of use in the Divine names, Jehovah and Elohim (LORD and God). The former is found predominantly in the first book and the last two, while the latter title is mainly used in the central books. (2) The repetition of particular psalms in different books (Psalms xiv. and liii.) seems to indicate that the books were gradually compiled for use in the Temple worship. See

also Psalm xviii. and 2 Samuel xxii. Dr. C. H. Waller's conjecture that Books 1 and 2 were used in David's reign at Zion and Gihon respectively, until both places were united in Solomon's Temple, is interesting and ingenious, and may be approximately true. (3) The first word, "Blessed," is a sort of keynote of the whole collection, only with a significant ascending scale. In the earlier psalms it is "Blessed is the man,"—the believer in God. In the latter psalms, and especially towards the close, it is "Blessed be God"—God in the believer. (4) The titles will reveal authorship for the most part and also groups of psalms of a particular character. (5) Sometimes there are, as it were, *twin* psalms (as Psalms cxii. and cxiii.), being connected by subject-matter, either in comparison, or continuation, or contrast. There are many instances of this.

In the study of the Psalms we should seek to become acquainted with them generally and intellectually as well as spiritually in detached texts and portions. They will yield untold spiritual profit to all who will yield mind and heart to them.

Proverbs.

A very valuable contrast and corrective to that undue attention to the Psalms which we are sometimes tempted to give. The Psalms emphasise devotion, the Proverbs duty; and one is the complement

of the other. The Proverbs are a tonic to the spiritual life, and full of practical power for everyday duty. Here again we seem to have a fivefold division.

1. Chapters i.–ix. This section does not include any proverbs strictly so called.

2. Chapters x.–xxiv. The main section of the book, with three subdivisions.

(*a*) x. 1–xxii. 16.

(*b*) xxii. 17–xxiv. 22.

(*c*) xxiv. 23–34.

3. Chapters xxv.–xxix.

4. Chapter xxx.

5. Chapter xxxi.

Isaiah.

Among the prophets there is none greater than Isaiah, and his book is worthy of the closest study. Its fulness of reference to our Lord has led to Isaiah being called the Evangelical prophet, the prophet of the evangel, the Gospel of Salvation by sacrifice. The contents are mainly threefold in structure, though capable of extensive subdivision.

1. Chapters i.–xxxv. Prophecies; chiefly of the Assyrian period.

In this there are smaller groups of prophecies to be studied separately, e.g. chapters i.–v.; chapter vi.; chapters vii.–xii.; chapters xiii.–xxiii.; chapters

xxiv.–xxvii.; chapters xxviii.–xxxiii.; chapters xxxiv. and xxxv.

2. Chapters xxxvi.–xxxix. Historical section. Two chapters look backward to the first section referring to Assyria, and two look forward to the second referring to Babylon. Dr. Bullinger, in his ingenious but not wholly convincing little pamphlet on "Isaiah—its Structure and Scope," suggests that these chapters may be summarised thus :—

(*a*) Message from the King of Assyria: Hezekiah spreads it before the Lord: Isaiah sent with reply. Chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii.

(*b*) Message from the King of Terrors (Death): Hezekiah spreads it before the Lord: Isaiah sent with reply. Chapter xxxviii.

(*c*) Message from the King of Babylon: Hezekiah does *not* spread it before the Lord: Isaiah sent with reply. Chapter xxxix.

3. Chapters xl.–lxvi. Prophecies: chiefly of the Babylonian period.

In this section of twenty-seven chapters there are three clear divisions of nine chapters each, marked by the *same thought at the end of each nine*, about the fate of the wicked (see last verses of chapters xlviii., lvii., lxvi.).

(*a*) xxxix.–xlviii. The deliverance coming.

(*b*) xlix.–lvii. The Deliverer.

(*c*) lviii.–lxvi. The results.

It is worthy of note that in this section we have some of the clearest detailed predictions of our Lord and His work, and also some of the thoughts which are found so richly expanded in the writings of St. Paul. And it is worth while (even as a help to memory) to realise that in this section we have twenty-seven chapters in our English Bible, the centre of them being that mountain-peak the fifty-third where Christ is all! It should be added that Isaiah, and indeed all the prophets, must certainly be read in the Revised Version.

Lamentations.

Note here a striking illustration of the Jewish literary methods. In the first place, the verses are limited to the number of the Hebrew alphabet—twenty-two—in each chapter excepting chapter iii., where we have sixty-six, or three times twenty-two. Then each verse of each chapter commences with a letter (in order) of the alphabet, e.g. verse 1 with Aleph, and so on. In chapter iii. each Hebrew letter has three verses, e.g. 1–3, Aleph. Psalm cxix. is another illustration of this form of composition, each section of eight verses and each verse of the section commencing with the letters of the alphabet.

Amos.

This important prophecy illustrates what are

called the "minor prophets," and may be studied as follows :—

1. First Address : Threatening. Chapters i. and ii.

2. Second Address : Destruction. Chapters iii. and iv.

3. Third Address : Lamentation. Chapters v. and vi.

4. Series of Visions. Chapters vii.–ix. 10.

5. Promise of Restoration. Chapter ix. 11–15.

These are only a few samples of the books of the Old Testament. One word suggests what should alone satisfy every earnest Christian with reference to them. That is, *Mastery*. The more fully they are mastered, the clearer will be their messages of truth and grace and power.

It is a good plan to have some one book on hand for prolonged study, carrying a small copy of the text about with us for reading at odd moments, and then utilizing spare time for definite study. A month or three months spent on Genesis, or Joshua, or Samuel, or Isaiah, would be fruitful beyond measure in every way.

CHAPTER V

NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

If a knowledge of the Old Testament books is important, much more is it necessary to master thoroughly those of the New. We have already taken a "bird's-eye view" of the New Testament. We must now consider some of the books in detail, giving a few analyses as specimens of what can be done with all the books.

St. Matthew.

The first of four Gospels, each with its own character and purpose. Four Gospels and one Christ; four pictures of the one Lord. In each Gospel ask two questions: Can I discover its *purpose*? Can I detect the *plan* on which the purpose is carried out? Consider St. Matthew's purpose as revealed in chapter i. In verse 1 we have three names in close association: Jesus, David, Abraham. At once the keynote is struck. It is a book connecting Jesus with the Jews. As we read on we come to verse 22, where "that it might be

fulfilled" gives another hint. It is a book connecting Jesus with the Old Testament. This phrase and the parallel expression "as it is written" (ii. 5) are to be found frequently in St. Matthew, and should be carefully noted. The purpose, then, is to present Jesus as the Messiah, the Saviour of the Jews, the fulfilment of the Old Testament. But how is this purpose fulfilled? Is there any plan in the book? There are most assured marks of a careful structure. Look at iv. 17, "From that time," and xvi. 21, "from that time" (same phrase in the Greek). These two expressions mark off the Gospel into its parts. Up to iv. 17 all is introductory; then in iv. 17 we have the record of the earlier ministry. Note carefully that in this section (iv. 17–xvi. 20) we have no reference whatever to the Death; only our Lord's general instruction and miracles. But in xvi. 21 a new phase occurs. From that time Jesus began to reveal His approaching death. Thenceforward the miracles are fewer, and the revelation of the Passion more prominent. So we have our main analysis of the Gospel:

1. Introduction, leading to Ministry. i. 1–iv. 16.
2. Earlier Ministry. iv. 17–xvi. 20.
3. Later Ministry. xvi. 21–xxvi. 2.
4. Death and Resurrection. xxvi. 3–xxviii. 20.

This is the general plan. But as we look closer we are struck with a phrase in almost identical form

five times in the Gospel. See vii. 28 ; xi. 1 ; xiii. 53 ; xix. 1 ; xxvi. 1. These are each at the conclusion of a section of teaching, and we can at once see that St. Matthew's Gospel makes a prominent feature of our Lord's teaching. If the five great sections are studied it will be observed that they represent a five-fold aspect and order of teaching full of deepest interest, a five-fold proclamation of the king. This should be studied carefully. It is a special feature of the first Gospel.

Then as we continue to read we can see how the miracles are also occasionally grouped, as in chapter viii., though it is the words, not the works, of Jesus which are emphasised by St. Matthew.

Once more we read this Gospel, and note the recurring phrase, "the kingdom of heaven," found at least thirty-seven times, and not once in St. Mark and St. Luke, where it is the "Kingdom of God." Here is another hint of the plan and purpose of the Gospel—the intention of our Lord to found a kingdom. Thus we are impressed throughout with the greatness and glory of the Messianic King in His words and works, until at last the Gospel ends with the claim to "all power" and the assurance of His perpetual presence.

St. Mark.

Again we ask about the purpose, and we see it suggested in the opening chapter and verses.

No genealogy is given, and no record of the infancy, but an abrupt introduction to the active life and work of the Son of God. And as we read on this impression is deepened. Very little of the teaching of our Lord, but very much of His active service is recorded. But even so the general plan of the Gospel as marked by its subject-matter is much the same as that of St. Matthew.

1. Introduction to the Ministry. i. 1–14.
2. Earlier Ministry. i. 15–ix. 50.
3. Later Ministry. x. 1–xiii. 37.
4. Death and Resurrection. xiv. 1–xvi. 20.

In the light of the emphasis placed on our Lord's activity, we should note the frequency of the word "immediately." Read this in the Revised Version, as the Authorised Version gives different words for the same Greek word meaning "immediately." Then, as the secret of this activity, note that no Gospel gives such prominence to our Lord's seasons of retirement as this Gospel of work. See i. 35, and collect the others. Dr. Maclear in the Cambridge Bible for Schools is helpful on this Gospel, though the Gospel itself should be studied first and foremost.

St. Luke.

When we turn to the third Gospel we are met with a preface stating the general purpose of the author, but we do not at once gather his point of

view. The first chapter, however, breathes a very human and sympathetic spirit. We feel we are in the midst of some simple yet beautiful lives, and we have glimpses of hearts and homes full of "sweetness and light." So is it with chapter ii., and as we read on into chapter iii. we seem to get a clue in the difference in the genealogy from that in St. Matthew. There it stopped at Abraham. Here it extends to Adam. This is our clue. The third Gospel is the Gospel of our Lord's tender, sympathetic, large-hearted humanity, depicting Him as Son of Man rather than Son of David; and as we now read through with this key we find illustration after illustration of this spirit in the choice of the materials. Some of the parables and much of the teaching prove it. St. Luke's is the Gospel of love and grace for the outcast, the sufferer, the Samaritan, the prodigal. Read it carefully and watch this point closely all through.

The matter is arranged in the same general way as the former Gospels:

1. Introduction to the Ministry. Chapters i.–iii.
2. Early Ministry. iv. 1–ix. 50.
3. Later Ministry. ix. 51–xix. 48.
4. Death and Resurrection. xx. 1–xxiv. 53.

These three are called the "Synoptic Gospels," because they give a synopsis, or an almost identical outline of our Lord's ministry. They are built upon

the same general plan, which is evident even in spite of the peculiar characteristics of each Gospel.

We are at present concerned with the mastery of each Gospel separately. Later on we shall be able to consider their mutual relations.

St. John.

The fourth Gospel completes the fourfold picture of our Lord. The purpose of this Gospel is definitely stated in xx. 31. This verse should be carefully studied. The Gospel has a purpose (" written in order that "), and this a twofold one : to lead to belief in the historical *Jesus* as the *Messiah* and *Son of God*, and to lead, through belief, to the possession of life. Consider the seven terms of this verse : Believe ; Jesus ; Christ ; Son of God ; have ; life ; in His name. On these the whole Gospel is built up. They form its very substance.

But has the Gospel a *plan* ? Assuredly it has, for its purpose is expressed by means of it. The plan is the presentation of Christ in those aspects which elicited faith. The materials selected clearly reveal this.

Yet side by side there is the obvious fact that all did not receive Him, and so the Gospel reveals a growing unbelief, culminating in rejection and crucifixion. This unbelief is accounted for by the deep-seated sinfulness of man and his consequent

alienation from God. Thus these three elements run through the Gospel: Revelation, Reception, Rejection. They are found in the prologue; they are the warp and woof of every chapter.

With this twofold key of belief and unbelief, we may now consider the outline of the plan, and observe how closely the purpose is adhered to throughout. There are few more perfect literary structures than the Fourth Gospel.

(*a*) Prologue, i. 1–18. Verses 1–4, Revelation; 5–11, Rejection; 12–18, Reception.

(*b*) Revelation of the Messiah, i. 19–vi. 71. The beginnings of Faith and Unbelief.

(*c*) Conflict, and development of Unbelief into active Hostility side by side with the Growth of Faith, vii.–xii.

(*d*) Development of Faith, xiii.–xvii.

(*e*) Culmination of Unbelief, xviii., xix.

(*f*) Victory of Faith, xx.

(*g*) Epilogue, xxi.

Thus, on the foundation of the Manifestation of Jesus Christ, are raised the two decisive moral factors of Faith and Unbelief. It is worth while to note how the Prologue contains a summary of the whole Gospel:

(1) Ch. i. 1–4, Revelation = ch. i. 19–ch. vi.

(2) Ch. i. 5–11, Rejection = ch. vii.–ch. xii.

(3) Ch. i. 12–18, Reception = ch. xiii.–ch. xxi.

A very significant hint of this great contrast of Faith and Unfaith is given in the phrase "His own," which in i. 11 refers to unbelief, and in xiii. 1 refers to belief. These are practically the two great sections of the Gospel.

We may also note in the above plan a sevenfold structure, and see how the first division answers to the seventh, the second to the sixth, and the third to the fifth, leaving the central one (chapters xiii.–xvii.) as the kernel or dominant feature of the whole purpose—the growth of faith.

From this outline it is possible and very necessary to descend to detailed study, and the more minute the consideration the more clearly will the glories of this Gospel reveal themselves. Everything will be found in some way to subserve the purpose and to form part of the plan. By this means a thorough knowledge of the contents of the Gospel will be obtained, and also a knowledge of its thought in order and sequence. This will be much more advantageous than a mere recollection of the chapters as they occur in our Authorised Version, by giving them titles to aid the memory as a "rule of thumb." Such an aid may be useful, and any one who wishes to do this may think of a mountain-peak with two pathways up and down, one on either side. Then, taking the central chapter (chapter xi.) as the peak (the greatest miracle), it is possible to think our way

backwards through the first ten, and onwards through the last ten, and so grasp the contents. But far better is it to grasp the order of thought and the sequence of the contents, and so truly to think our way through St. John's wonderful account of his and our Master.

We have dealt more fully with this Gospel because of its great importance, but we are anxious not to supersede but only to stimulate thought, and so we urge all to master this Gospel for themselves. We might purchase a penny edition, keep it in the pocket for constant use, and then read and read and read until we see the purpose glowing in every section, and the plan gradually and beautifully leading up to its culmination in that greatest confession of faith, "My Lord and my God."

The Acts.

For Christian workers in particular this book is of the greatest value, and should have our most careful and thorough study. It stands midway between the Gospels and Epistles and is the link of connexion between them. It is at once the necessary explanation of the Gospels and the required presupposition of the Epistles.

Its connexion with the Gospels is close and important, especially with that of St. Luke. This may be seen from the two accounts of the "Great

Forty Days" in Luke xxiv. and Acts i., the former written from the standpoint of the close of the earthly life and the latter from that of the commencement of the heavenly life of our Lord.

What, then, is the *purpose* of Acts? Study carefully i. 1 and 2. The "former treatise" is a record of what Jesus began to do and teach before His Ascension. The present book is a record of what He *continued* to do and teach *after* His Ascension. So the book is really a record of "the Acts of the Ascended Lord." He is the real Worker (i. 24; ii. 33; iii. 16; iv. 10); and the Holy Spirit the real Power (i. 2, and seventy other passages). Then notice the work described: "doing and teaching." It is a book of deeds and words, action and instruction. Mark the *order*, and see Luke xxiv. 19 and Acts vii. 22. Consider, too, the emphasis on the word "began." This book is also a record of "beginnings," the commencements of the Church at particular places, and the *first specimens* of various methods of Christian work. This is the purpose, and the book should be studied with this ever in view if it is to be thoroughly and accurately made our own.

But has the book a *plan* also? Is it possible to trace how the purpose is carried out? Look at chapter i. 8, and note three great facts: (1) The purpose is to be realised through a special class of

people (" ye . . . witnesses "). (2) And through a special pathway of progress (note the three extending circles—Jerusalem, Samaria, uttermost part). This is not only geographical but also spiritual. Jerusalem stands for a people holding the true religion falsely or imperfectly. Samaria represents a mixture of true and false. " Uttermost " indicates false religions or none at all. (3) This purpose is to be realised by a special equipment of power (" Holy Spirit "). The whole book is built up on these three lines.

Now let us analyse the book, and for variety we will look at it from more than one standpoint. We can consider it—

1. According to historical extension (outwardly):
   (*a*) Church of Jerusalem. i. 1–vii. 60.
   (*b*) Church of Palestine. viii. 1–xii. 25.
   (*c*) Church of the Gentiles. xiii. 1–xxviii. 31.
2. According to spiritual expansion (inwardly):
   (*a*) Definite commencement. i. 1–viii. 3.
   (*b*) Deepening experiences. viii. 4–xii. 25.
   (*c*) Astonishing progress. xiii. 1–xxi. 16.
   (*d*) Apparent check. xxi. 17–xxviii. 31.
3. According to personal effort. (The two men around whom the history mainly turns):
   (*a*) St. Peter, i.–xii. In five sections (find them), closing with imprisonment and release.

(*b*) St. Paul, xiii.–xxviii. In five sections (note these), closing with imprisonment (and release ?).

Again we urge on all a thorough study of these two books, viz. St. John and Acts. It is for this that we have dwelt more fully on them. They will minister to mind and heart a full abundance of light and grace and power, enriching and equipping us for the service of God.

We now complete our consideration of the study of the New Testament by books, by giving some suggestions for the study of the Epistles. This section of the New Testament especially lends itself to the method we are now considering, for the Epistles for the most part have a definite purpose and are fairly easily analysed.

Romans.

The first Epistle in the order of our Authorised Version, and in some respects the greatest of them. The key to its meaning is found in i. 17. The Gospel is declared to be God's power to salvation (verse 16), because in it is revealed "God's Righteousness" (verse 17). The theme of the Epistle is "The Righteousness of God," and the whole of it is built up on this one idea. Let it be read through at a sitting if possible, with this thought in mind. Then it should be read again, and even a third time, noting

carefully the general impression it makes. Then consider the following analysis. Find out whether it is correct. Improve, modify, alter it where necessary.

Personal introduction. i. 1–15.

1. Righteousness required by God because of sin. i. 16–iii. 20.
2. Righteousness provided by God in Christ. iii. 21–26.
3. Righteousness received through faith. iii. 27–30.
4. Righteousness anticipated and illustrated in the Old Testament. iv. 1–25.
5. Righteousness realised in personal experience. v.–viii.
6. Righteousness rejected by the self-righteous Jews. ix.–xi.
7. Righteousness manifested in daily living. xii. 1–xv. 13.

Personal conclusion. xv. 13–xvi. 27.

It will thus be seen that almost every aspect of Righteousness is discussed and illustrated in the Epistle. Let us ever note that "God's Righteousness" includes two elements: His Personal Righteousness, that is, the Righteousness of His character revealed in Christ; and His Bestowed Righteousness, that is, the Righteousness of His grace imparted in Christ. We see this in the great passage of iii. 26:

"That he might be *just* (Personal) and the *justifier* (Bestowed)." Different passages emphasise the one or the other according to the context. Every Christian should make a point of understanding as thoroughly as possible the Epistle to the Romans. It is an education for mind, heart, conscience and soul.

Galatians.

Bishop Lightfoot calls Galatians the sketch of which Romans is the finished picture. The simplest division is one into three parts of two chapters each:

1. Personal. i. and ii.
2. Doctrinal. iii. and iv.
3. Practical. v. and vi.

Few Epistles are more intense in feeling and expression. It came from the very heart of a faithful shepherd, who feared the loss of his flock, the flock endeared to him as that gathered on his first missionary journey (Acts xiii. and xiv.).

Ephesians.

One of the mountain-peaks of Revelation, disclosing the ultimate and crowning purposes of God in Christ and in the Church. As usual with St. Paul, the great division is Doctrinal (i.–iii.) and Practical (iv.–vi.), the latter following as the necessary and inevitable consequence of the former. The

highest doctrine is the motive power of the lowest duty. The keynote is in i. 3, and the entire Epistle illustrates and elaborates this verse.

1 Thessalonians.

Here we have one of the simplest (and probably the earliest) of St. Paul's writings. It consists of two parts—(1) Personal: ending with prayer, i.–iii. (2) Practical: ending with prayer, iv.–v.

Hebrews.

Another of the great Epistles, and at once a letter and a treatise. Consider its theme in i. 1–4, God's complete and final Revelation in the Divine Person and Priestly Work of His Son:

1. The glory of the Person. i. 4–iv. 13.
2. The glory of the Priesthood. iv. 14–x. 18.
3. Personal appropriation and practical application. x. 19–xii. 29.

Each of these sections is divided and subdivided in the course of the discussion. A good detailed plan can be seen in Murray's *Holiest of All.* But first and foremost we should make the general outline of the Epistle our own.

The Epistle treats its theme in the light of the Old Testament, and shows the superiority of our Lord to the men and the ritual of the Old Covenant. The word "better" is a key-word, and is found some eleven times, while the *idea* is found in every chapter.

1 Peter.

Instead of an analysis, a key-word is sometimes helpful. It is so here, and the word is "suffer." The Epistle is written to encourage suffering believers, and they are incited to endurance by the thought of the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow.

1 John.

This is one of the Epistles which it is difficult to analyse, though there is a distinct unity of thought running through it. The purpose is threefold—i. 4, ii. 1, and v. 13; and these threads form the very texture of the Epistle. The last passage (v. 13) links it to the Gospel as its sequel (xx. 31). It is intended that those who have life by believing (Gospel) should *know* it (Epistle), and keep on believing. This assurance has three tests—obedience, love of the brethren, and the possession of the Spirit. Obedience is dealt with in i. 5–ii. 6; Love in ii. 7–iii. 24; and the Spirit in iii. 24–v. 12.

These examples of New Testament books will suffice to illustrate the necessity and value of this mode of study. We have avoided giving too many details, because this would defeat our object, which is to stimulate first-hand study; all the helps in the world will not make up for this, and may probably hinder it.

CHAPTER VI

OLD TESTAMENT SUBJECTS

Side by side with the study of the Bible by books, it is both possible and necessary to give ourselves to the study of the subjects or topics which are to be found in particular books, or spread over larger sections of the Scriptures.

The present chapter is intended to suggest a few of the many topics that arise from our reading of the Old Testament. It is a most fruitful method of study, fruitful to mind and heart, and will lead to a thorough knowledge of the contents of the Bible and of the order and proportion of its teaching.

Leading Ideas of Particular Books.

It is often practicable to find a prominent thought running through a book and variously illustrated in it. This is not possible with every book, but it certainly is with some, if not with many. The best method is to read a book through once, twice, thrice, and be on the look-out for one master-thought or idea. For example, Genesis, as we have already

seen, is a book of origins, or beginnings; and the whole book illustrates this idea. Exodus seems to have for its keynote, Redemption. The need, the method, and the results of redemption form the substance of the book. In Leviticus the main idea is, perhaps, Worship. Test this in reading, and correct if necessary. We may take Joshua, and consider whether Conquest is not the thread running through it. Or Judges, and note the dismal Failure from first to last. In Job the main thought seems to be the Providence of God; and in the Psalms, Communion with God. The burden of Isaiah appears to be Faith leading to Faithfulness, and this is pointed by the history of his relations to Kings Ahaz and Hezekiah.

The above are among the clearest illustrations of this method, but there are others available to careful thought. The results of this plan do not lie on the surface. They need discovery, and this means study.

Biographies.

Here we have one of the most interesting, most enjoyable, and most valuable subjects of study. God has been pleased to give us so much of His Word in biographical form, that a knowledge of the men and women is absolutely essential to a true understanding of the Bible and of God's revelation contained in it. We thereby see the revelation in its

progress, and at the same time are enabled to note the effects of the working of God on the souls of men.

With such a large field it is almost as impossible as it is unnecessary to particularise, but it may be well to call special attention to two points. The life of the particular person before us should be studied as minutely as possible, and also in the order of progress and development of events. For example, Moses' life is capable of three divisions—Early Life, Life in Midian, Life as Leader of Israel. In David's we notice five sections—David at Home, David at Court, David in Exile, David King of Judah, David King over all Israel. The other point is the extreme spiritual interest and profit of the lesser lives of the Old Testament, such as Caleb, Aaron, Ruth, Eli, Mephibosheth, and many more. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the value of this biographical study.

Historical Periods.

There are certain periods of the history contained in the Old Testament which need to be studied carefully and thoroughly. They are pivots on which very much turns; e.g.:—

1. The stages in the journeyings of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. Clear views are necessary of the events immediately after leaving Egypt, of those

subsequent to Sinai, and of those immediately preceding the death of Moses.

2. The steps in the conquest of Canaan. The knowledge of the three great battles by means of which the whole matter was practically settled.

3. The causes (not merely the occasion) of the separation of the kingdoms. A most fruitful study reaching from Solomon back to Joshua's time.

4. The rise of the Prophets. Starting with Samuel, they can be traced through David's and Solomon's reigns, until we find them occupying the most important place in the kingdom.

5. The Kingdom of Israel. At its height (Saul to Solomon). In separation (Rehoboam to Zedekiah). In Captivity.

6. The three stages of the Captivity of Judah. Under Jehoiakim (Daniel i. 1, and 2 Kings xxiv. 1). Under Jehoiachin (2 Kings xxiv. 10–16). Under Zedekiah (Jeremiah lii. 26). How many have grasped these and their details clearly ?

7. The three stages of the Return from Captivity. Under Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra iii. 2). Under Ezra (Ezra vii.). Under Nehemiah (Nehemiah i. and ii.).

The Miracles.

Notice and study these under the four epochs in which they are gathered. It is noteworthy that

they do not appear at haphazard, but at special times :—

1. The Creation. This was itself a miracle. No others of any note appear afterwards until

2. The time of Moses. God was leading His people out of Egypt and appeared miraculously on their behalf. This was a special manifestation against the gods of Egypt. Then comes

3. The time of Elijah and Elisha. The people were sunk in idolatry and a new interposition of God was necessary. After this miracles are seen in

4. The time of Daniel. When God's people were in captivity and surrounded by heathenism and idolatry, once again He bore witness to Himself.

Study the particular miracles in each case, and note miracles of judgment, of power, of majesty and of blessing.

The Work of the Prophet.

Moses was in some senses a prophet, for he calls himself one ; but Samuel was the virtual founder of the line. The work of a prophet was twofold :—

1. Witnessing for God to his own time. He was an " incarnate conscience " to the king and people. Like Isaiah with Hezekiah, the prophet was a statesman, politician and patriot, whose one object was to keep the king and people true to God.

2. Witnessing for God respecting future times.

This is the work usually called prediction, and with us a prophet is one who *foretells*. But in the Old Testament he is also, and often chiefly, one who *forth-tells*. Jonah was a witness to his own day only, a forth-teller. Isaiah was both forth-teller and foreteller. The primary meaning of "prophet" is one who speaks on behalf of another, and this may or may not include prediction of the future. Sometimes it did, sometimes it did not. The key-text to this meaning is Exodus vii. 1, which should ever be kept in mind. Considered as interpreters of their own time, the prophets should be read in close connexion with the history they refer to, and when this is done, their fulness, variety, freshness, and power will be evident.

Up to the present we have been considering some of the more important historical topics—subjects dealing with facts and men. They contain their own spiritual teaching for all who dwell on them, and no one can expect to grasp the spiritual meaning without first mastering the facts on which it is based. But there is other and more direct spiritual teaching in the Old Testament, to which we shall refer in our next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

OLD TESTAMENT DOCTRINE

We have already considered the proper methods of studying the historical facts and the literary structure which lie at the foundation of the Old Testament. These facts, as we have seen, carry their own particular lessons.

It is necessary, however, to go further, and consider the spiritual teaching of the Old Testament in its entirety. The historical unity amid the diversity which we studied in our first chapter has its counterpart in the spiritual truths found from Genesis to Malachi, and it is at once our duty and privilege to discover what the Old Testament has to say on the great spiritual realities which concern the life of man.

It is only possible to suggest heads under which to study the particular doctrines. The student should arrange under each division or subdivision the results of his reading.

One great principle of immense importance must be grasped and ever kept in view in the doctrinal study of the Old Testament. It is that of the

Progressiveness of Revelation.

God revealed Himself, not only at "sundry times" but also in "divers manners," to the fathers (Hebrews i. 1). He taught men as they were able to bear it. He led them step by step from the dawn of revelation up to the meridian of fulness and splendour of His manifestation "in these last days in His Son" (Hebrews i. 1). We are to remember, therefore, that while each stage of the revelation was perfect, it was perfect for that time, and not necessarily perfect with reference to succeeding stages. A knowledge of this principle of progress in God's revelation of Himself enables us to avoid a twofold error: it prevents us, on the one hand, from undervaluing the Old Testament by reason of our fuller light from the New Testament; on the other hand, it prevents us from using the Old Testament in any of its stages without guidance from the complete revelation in Christ. We shall thus be enabled, in a word, to obtain the correct spiritual perspective from which to study the Old Testament, and to derive from it the wealth of spiritual instruction it was intended to convey to all ages (Romans xv. 4).

This principle of progress in God's revelation is also of great practical service in meeting certain current objections to the Old Testament. There are those who reject it because of its alleged cruel-

ties, such as the slaughter of the Canaanites, or because of certain manifestations in individual life and practice not consonant with New Testament principles. Now, while we are not to be guided to-day by many of the examples of the Old Testament, it is equally true that *in so far as what they said and did was due to a revelation of God, that revelation was perfect for that time*, whatever additional truth came afterwards for newer needs. We say *in so far as what they said and did was of God*, because not even in the Old Testament are we to understand that God necessarily approved of *all* that His servants said and did, even when they thought they were doing Him service. If this were the place to do it, the instance of the Canaanites, already referred to, could be justified without much difficulty in the light of the awful depths of sin to which they had descended, and it is at least suggestive that those who are so much concerned about the Canaanites were quite jubilant over the dispersal of the Khalifa's power as a blow struck for civilisation and human safety.

We have thus to distinguish carefully between what is called *dispensational* truth and *permanent* truth in the Old Testament—that is, between those elements of God's revelation intended solely for the immediate need and those which are of eternal validity. To put it in yet another way, we have

to remember the difference between what is written *to us* and *for us*. All Scripture was written *for our learning*, but not all was written *to us* directly. Much of it addressed to Jews was primarily and often exclusively for them, and is only for us to-day by way of application. To give one example out of many: the first commandment is of permanent and eternal value and force, but the introductory words giving the motive for it (Exodus ch. xx. 2) are no longer applicable to us except by means of a process of spiritualising. This distinction between the dispensations will solve many an Old Testament difficulty. But we must not continue. Suffice it once more to say that the progress of doctrine is one of the master-keys of the Old Testament. Let us now consider some of the main elements of the teaching.

The Doctrine of God.

Take, first, the book of Genesis, and consider its fundamental ideas of God—

1. As Creator.
2. As Lawgiver.
3. As Judge.
4. As Provider or Ruler.
5. As Redeemer.

Notice how these come out of the early chapters. In them we have the germ of all that follows, and everything else up to Malachi may be included in

these ideas. The revelation of God concerning Himself takes various forms, according as the media are patriarchs, judges, kings, or prophets, and the ever-increasing fulness from patriarch up to prophet affords a most fruitful study.

In this connexion a study of the names and titles of God is of great importance. For full and proper study here a knowledge of Hebrew is of course necessary; but there are many helps available in English which will be of real service. The names of God (Elohim), Jehovah, God Almighty (El Shaddai), the Everlasting God (Genesis xxi.), and the various titles associated with Jehovah (Jireh, Shalom, etc.) are illustrations from this field. The "Name" of God is the revelation of His Nature, and the various names and titles are so many aspects of His Divine character. It is important to note carefully, as succeeding chapters and stages are studied, what addition is made in each to the doctrine of God.

The Doctrine of Man.

Look again at Genesis, and see there a summary of the whole Bible concerning man.

1. His glory (in creation).
2. His humiliation (through sin).
3. His need (of redemption).
4. His longings (for God).
5. His endeavours (after righteousness).

Each of these can be traced right through the Old Testament, and illustrations almost innumerable found. Take, for example, under 4, man's yearnings after God, and read especially Job and the Psalms for these. Consider, too, under 5, man's efforts by his own works of sacrifice, etc., to merit God's favour; and then note the true idea of sacrifice, as taught in Psalms l. and li. and Micah v. 5–8. Study well the Old Testament picture of man, and from it will come a deeper realisation of what grace must and can do for him.

The Doctrine of Religion.

This will show the Divine dealings with man, and how the doctrine concerning God comes in contact with the life of man. We find religion in the Old Testament under three successive and yet co-existent forms:—

1. The Theocracy or the direct government of God (from Creation to Samuel).

2. The Monarchy or Divine government through the kings (Saul to the Captivity).

3. The Hierarchy, or Divine government through priests and prophets (the Captivity and Restoration).

We have said successive, yet co-existent, because in the second as well as in the third period the prophets and priests were influential as media of Divine revelation, even though they were not actually in direct authority over the people.

In the whole course of these three forms there seems to be one main principle—Education. God's people were being trained and led upwards and onward from a religion of *outward restraint* to a religion of *inward constraint*—from a system of outward precepts to a system of inward principles. In other words, God was dealing with the world as we deal with children. We impose our will from without, and so train the child gradually until the power for right-doing is found in his own will from within. The Old Testament is the record of the world's moral childhood "under governors until the time appointed of the Father"—until the moral and spiritual manhood of the revelation in Christ (Galatians iv. 1, *ff.*). Traces of this gradual progress can be seen right through the Old Testament—the growing subservience of the outward to the inward, the superiority of the spirit to the letter, and the gradual progress and development of religion leading up to the "worship in spirit and truth" of the New Testament.

There are other aspects of Old Testament teaching arising out of these, on which we cannot now enter. But perhaps the most important—certainly the most immediately important—aspect remains to be considered. As this will require fuller treatment we must reserve it for our next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE main purpose and supreme glory of the revelation of the Old Testament are summed up in the well-known words of our Lord: "They are they which testify of Me." Everything else, however important and necessary in itself, is subordinate to this one great end, the anticipation of and preparation for the Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the Son of Man. No study of the Old Testament can be complete which does not include and emphasize the spiritual element of the Divine revelation of the Messiah. In it we find both prophecy and preparation—prophecy of and preparation for the Messiah. These two ideas are brought forward in several aspects, each needing separate study, and all combining to give the full picture of "Christ in the Old Testament."

CHRIST IN PROPHECY.

As we saw in a former chapter, there is a thread of prophecy, of anticipation of Someone coming, from

Genesis iii. to Malachi iv. The Old Testament is assuredly a book of prophecy, of hopes raised by the promises of God, and yet of prophecy mainly unfulfilled, of hopes unrealised. We can only suggest in merest outline some methods of exploring this wealth.

1. Consider the prophecies in their chronological order :—

(*a*) The prophecies of Genesis.
(*b*) The prophecies of the Exodus. (Exodus–Deuteronomy).
(*c*) The prophecies of David's and Solomon's reigns.
(*d*) The earlier prophets of Judah.
(*e*) The prophets of Israel.
(*f*) The later prophets of Judah.
(*g*) The prophets of the Captivity (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel).
(*h*) The prophets of the Return (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).

Under these divisions the particular Messianic prophecies of each writer may be studied and the torch of hope seen to be handed on from one to another until we come to the last of the prophets, and then to the four centuries of silence.

2. Consider the prophecies in their details.

We should look for the contribution of each writer to the complete picture of the Messiah. We may thus consider Him as the Seed of the Woman, the

Source of Blessing (Abraham), the Shiloh (Jacob), the Prophet (Moses), the Star (Balaam), the King (David), the Sufferer (Isaiah), the Lord our Righteousness (Jeremiah), the Son of Man (Daniel), the Fellow of God (Zechariah), the Lord (Malachi). These are but a few of the varied aspects, and each adds something to the Divine completeness of the representation. We should notice, too, how the prophecies commence with the broadest and most general reference to the Messiah as the Seed of the Woman, and how the subsequent additions give definiteness to the picture. His nation, His tribe, His family, His birthplace, His title, His date—all are gradually given.

And when we have gathered all these materials, let us pause to remember that these prophecies date, at the lowest, from three or four hundred years before the birth of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem, while many date from six hundred to more than a thousand years before that event. We are thus face to face with the element of *prediction*, of "history written beforehand" by the hand of God. This is part of that miraculous Divine element which gives to the Old Testament its character as a Divine revelation.

Christ in Ritual.

We have already noticed that the Old Testament

is a book wherein various religious ceremonies are prominent, ceremonies needing explanation, and not receiving their full interpretation within Old Testament times. Consider some of these :—

1. The Sacrifices. They were intended to reveal the true methods of approach to God, and, under various aspects, they emphasize reconciliation, consecration, and fellowship.

(*a*) Study the beginnings of sacrifice in Genesis.

(*b*) Consider their development under Moses.

The basis was the Passover Sacrifice of Redemption, and then followed the sacrifices of Leviticus i.–iv. (See *Studies in Leviticus*, by Rev. Hubert Brooke.)

2. The Purifications. These taught another aspect of religion, the need of purity in drawing near to God. They will bear the most careful study. The ritual of the cleansing of the leper is a striking instance.

3. The Priesthood. This brings before us the agents by which the people might draw near to God. (See for this and the former points Mr. Brooke's valuable little work.)

4. The Festivals. These give the particular occasions on which the people could worship God. The daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, seventh year, jubilee year, and other services were all so many

times of preparation for the worship in spirit and truth (John iv.) of all times and places. "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us, therefore *let us keep continual festival*" (Greek).

Christ in Personal Types.

The question of Old Testament ritual is inextricably bound up with the people of the Old Testament, and consequently we have Christ not only prefigured in *things*, but also in *persons*. This is usually called the study of the types of the Old Testament. A type has been defined as an illustration in a lower sphere of a truth belonging to a higher. There are various forms of illustration, such as type, prophecy, allegory, simile, symbol. Types are illustrations in *facts* and *deeds*, as contrasted with illustrations in words, fancies, and pictures.

In no study do we so much need "sanctified common sense" as in the study of the types. So much fancifulness and absurdity have been shown by some writers that many are tempted to go to the other extreme and abandon the study altogether. But "abuse does not take away use," and we do not hesitate to say that, if prosecuted soberly and prayerfully, no study can be more fruitful.

The best way is to begin with those Old Testament subjects which are referred to in the New Testament as anticipatory of Christ. We have Divine and

apostolic warrant for seeing this in the Manna, the Lamb, the Rock, the Brazen Serpent, and other similar instances. In the same category is the use made in Hebrews of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices.

When we leave the safe ground of the New Testament we must study with two important and connected truths in mind: (1) The great difference between primary interpretation and spiritual application. The primary meaning of a passage, i.e. what it was to those to whom it was addressed, is one thing, but our spiritual use of it may be quite another, and the latter was probably not in the writer's mind at all. (2) The great difference between a type and a coincidence. The former is an illustration Divinely given and intended. The latter is what we see in the narrative, but which was not necessarily purposed by God. For instance, Jonah's circumstances were typical of our Lord's burial and resurrection. This is a type. The story of Joseph, with its wonderful likeness to our Lord's history in its detail, may not have been intentional. This would be a coincidence.

With these safeguards let us consider some of the aspects of this truly wonderful field.

1. The personal types (or coincidences), e.g. Adam, Noah, Melchizedec, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David.

2. The facts of the history typically used, e.g. Jacob's ladder, the tabernacle, Canaan privilege, brazen serpent, manna, and many more.

3. The peculiar details of certain occurrences giving different *aspects* of teaching.

(*a*) The two birds (Leviticus xiv.); the two goats (Leviticus xvi.); suggesting the aspects of death and resurrection.

(*b*) The two priesthoods (Aaron and Melchizedec); the two leaders (Moses and Joshua); the two kingships (David and Solomon).

No one type is sufficient to anticipate the fulness of the person and work of Christ.

(*c*) The details of Joseph's history, e.g. beloved of father, hated of brethren, sold, suffering, exalted, feeding the world. Considered with care, the coincidences are remarkable.

On this subject we may refer our readers to *A Study of the Types*, by Miss A. R. Habershon. We do not by any means endorse all its teaching, but there is much that is suggestive and helpful, and if read with a critical mind, it will provoke thought on this fruitful subject. A valuable and suggestive work, entitled *The Five Offerings and their Law*, by E. M. S. (Marshall Bros.) can be warmly recommended. Fairbairn's *Typology of Scripture* (two volumes, 21s.) may also be mentioned for reference.

4. The appearances of the Angel of the Covenant

are to be noted. These are not strictly types, but actual anticipations of the Incarnation by the Second Person of the Trinity. A careful study of such passages as Genesis xviii., Joshua v., and Judges xiii. will show that the references are not to a created angel, but to an actual appearance of God in angelic form.

One additional caution may be added. The types are not to be regarded as our primary source of doctrine, but only used for the confirmation or illustration of doctrine deduced from clear statements of Scripture.

It will be seen from the above fragmentary sketch what a wonderful field we have to traverse. Christ is verily the substance and Subject of the Old Testament, and the more deeply we study the records of the Old Covenant, the more we shall be convinced that even there "Christ is all and in all."

CHAPTER IX

NEW TESTAMENT SUBJECTS

We have now to consider the very fruitful method of the study of the New Testament by topics or subjects; and if the Old Testament is so helpful in this way, much more will the New Testament prove suggestive and inspiring to all who will thus "search" this portion of the Word of God. It is obvious that only a very few suggestions can be made, but these will more than suffice to show the possibilities of this mode of study. We proceed on much the same lines as we did in considering Old Testament subjects.

Leading Ideas of Books.

It is possible to find the leading idea or ideas of almost every book of the New Testament. We have already seen something of this in our study of particular books, but it deserves fresh emphasis. It is most valuable to discover the main thought of a book, and then to read and study it with this solely in mind. For the Gospels a suggestive, if sometimes fanciful, book is Archbishop Alexander's *Leading*

Ideas of the Gospels (second edition, Macmillan & Co.).

The same method can be adopted with great profit in the study of the Acts and the Epistles, and will prove of real service in any further and more detailed study of the particular book. Not at once will the "leading ideas" emerge, but they will, if we *study* rather than read.

The Life of our Lord.

Taking the four Gospels as a whole, and using a *Harmony*, we should endeavour to obtain a picture of the earthly life as a whole, and be able to locate this or that incident in its place and chronological order. We know the Gospels in far too "scrappy" a manner. We cannot see the wood for the trees, and we have no sense of the historical perspective of the ministry. Dr. Stalker in his invaluable handbook on this subject (*Life of Christ*, T. & T. Clark, 1*s.* 6*d.*) suggestively and truly divides the three years into the Year of Obscurity, the Year of Favour, and the Year of Opposition. With a *Gospel Harmony* and Dr. Stalker's little work, ordinary students will obtain all the guidance they require.

The Mutual Relations of the Gospels.

We have seen in a former chapter something of the special feature of each Gospel, but it is also

necessary to look at them as a whole. Four Gospels and one Lord! Why? Because they are four distinct though connected pictures of His Person and Work. In the early Church it was fancifully thought that the figures in Ezekiel i. and Revelation iv. 7 represented or illustrated the four Evangelists. If we take the latter text as an application only, we have the following:—

(*a*) The Lion—Matthew—Kingship.

(*b*) The Calf—Mark—Service.

(*c*) The Man—Luke—Humanity.

(*d*) The Eagle—John—Godhead.

Or we may consider four passages beginning with "Behold" and note:

(*a*) Behold a King. Isaiah xxxii. 1.

(*b*) Behold my Servant. Isaiah xlii. 1.

(*c*) Behold the Man. John xix. 5.

(*d*) Behold your God. Isaiah xl. 9.

The aim is one and the same, but their methods and aspects differ. St. Matthew demonstrates; St. Mark depicts; St. Luke declares; St. John describes. St. Matthew demonstrates (based on Old Testament) the Coming of an Expected Saviour; St. Mark depicts the Life of a Powerful Saviour; St. Luke declares the Grace of a Human Saviour; St. John describes the Possession of a Personal Saviour. St. Matthew's is the Jewish, St. Mark's the Roman, St. Luke's the Greek, and St. John's the Believer's

Saviour and Lord. It is interesting to notice that they thus represent the order of historical and spiritual development; and it is worth while to remember that the *last fact* referred to in connexion with our Lord in each Gospel also shows this true order of development:—

(*a*) St. Matthew—The Resurrection—xxviii. 6.
(*b*) St. Mark—The Ascension—xvi. 19.
(*c*) St. Luke—The Promise of the Spirit—xxiv. 49.
(*d*) St. John—The Second Coming—xxi. 22.

Can this have happened wholly "by chance"? There is a very interesting and beautiful note on this topic in the introduction to St. Luke in the Cambridge Bible for Schools, by Dean Farrar.

Biographies.

Here again, as in the Old Testament, we have a delightful study. We should first dwell on the men and women whose lives are more prominent, especially the Apostles Peter and Paul. We could take St. Peter and find a sevenfold study:—

(*a*) His Conversion. John i.
(*b*) His call to the Ministry. Luke v.
(*c*) His call to the Apostleship. Luke vi.
(*d*) His great Confession. Matthew xvi.
(*e*) His Fall and Restoration. Mark xiv.
(*f*) His Work in the Early Church. Acts i.–xii.
(*g*) His Later Life. Epistles.

To mention St. Paul is to cover a large portion of the New Testament. We can study him personally from the historical and spiritual standpoint, noting seven stages :—

(*a*) His Antecedents. Acts viii. and allusions in Epistles.

(*b*) His Conversion. Acts ix.

(*c*) His Earliest Christian Work. Acts ix.–xii.

(*d*) His First Journey. Acts xiii. and xiv.

(*e*) His Second Journey. Acts xvi.

(*f*) His Third Journey. Acts xviii.

(*g*) His Imprisonment and Probable Release. Acts xxi. to xxviii.

Or we may consider his Epistles and study them chronologically, regarding them as covering his life symbolised as a day ;—

(*a*) Morning : 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

(*b*) Noonday ; Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans.

(*c*) Afternoon ; Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians, Philemon.

(*d*) Evening : 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy.

Two little books of great value on St. Paul's life have been recommended in an earlier chapter, Findlay's and Stalker's. They will repay very careful study.

We must not fail, however, to notice the more obscure characters of the New Testament. There

are many lives of which we have little information, but when the various passages are combined and compared they yield much fruit for heart and life. Such are the lives of John the Baptist, Andrew, Barnabas, the Mother of our Lord, and many more. We may take the last named as a specimen of what is meant. If we collect the passages referring to Mary the Mother of Jesus, we may note these five periods :—

(*a*) Unquestioning Trust. Luke i. 38.

(*b*) Perplexed Consideration. Luke ii. 9, 50, 51.

(*c*) Distinct Error. John ii. 1–11, and Mark iii. 21–31 (see margin and R.V.).

(*d*) Deep Darkness. John xix. 26.

(*e*) Full Sunlight. Acts i. 14.

The life and character of Barnabas can be similarly traced in several sections. So with many more. The field is almost inexhaustible, and we commend it heartily to every student.

Other Topics.

1. The Miracles of our Lord. These should be classified as to their character, subjects, and purpose. Distinguish between miracles on nature and on man, and between miracles of beneficence or of judgment. Note the eight (7 + 1) recorded in St. John as giving eight "signs," or aspects of our

Lord's work, manifesting His glory (John ii. 11). Consider also their results on enemies and disciples.

2. The Parables. Dwell on the reason for this method, after a year's ministry without it (Mark iv.). Parables were a test, concealing the truth from the indifferent and revealing it to the earnest. They served to sift the crowd of hearers who had been following our Lord. Study the seven parables of St. Matthew xiii., and mark their character and order. Is there any spiritual and historical connexion between them? Note the five parables of St. Luke xv. and xvi., and observe the special and intimate connexion between the first three and the last two. Ponder the rest of the parables, classifying them as to time and purpose.

3. Our Lord as a Teacher. What were the characteristics of His teaching? Authority, boldness, power, graciousness, and uniqueness are seen. Wherein does he differ from other great teachers? Is it not in His claim to be uniquely related to and sent by God? Study the development of His teaching, and also what a recent little book has called the *Ruling Ideas of our Lord* (by Dean D'Arcy). *The Teaching of Jesus*, by T. G. Selby, will also be found suggestive.

4. The relation of St. Paul to our Lord. How much of the early life of Christ is alluded to in the Epistles? How far are the great teachings of St.

Paul found in germ in the Gospels? St. Paul claimed to be an echo, and no more than an echo, of Christ. See how this comes out in every writing.

5. The Early Church. Study the Acts and Epistles. Note the birth, life, growth, fellowship, dangers, sins, service, joys, and hopes of Apostolic Christianity.

6. The Second Advent. Note its different aspects in the Gospels, and the peculiar contribution of each writer of the New Testament to the meaning of the "blessed hope."

7. The Seven Churches of Asia. Dwell on the characterisation of each Church, its strong and weak points, the warnings, encouragements, and promises.

So we might go on, but space fails. A study of the topics of the New Testament is among the most important methods of obtaining a thorough knowledge of the substance and detail of the books. First master the facts, and then see how they become factors and forces in human lives.

CHAPTER X

NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE

THE study of the New Testament by sections, books, and topics should lead to the important and necessary step of discovering the substance of the Christian doctrine therein recorded. The New Testament is pre-eminently our guide "into all the truth" associated with the personal and historical revelation of our Lord. The facts recorded are the foundation of the doctrine taught, and it is necessary to collect carefully the statements found in the various parts, and combine them into as complete a system of doctrine as we can obtain.

The first step in this connexion is to consider the New Testament books or periods in sections, and to note the stages of progress in Christian doctrine. This principle of doctrinal progress or development is of the very first importance to all students. Theology is a progressive science, and the course of actual progress in the study of it is somewhat as follows:—First: The observation of facts newly *revealed*. Second: The consideration

of facts whose full meaning is newly *discovered*, though already revealed. Third: Facts to be correctly combined, and correlated with all other preceding ones. The first two give us what may be called Biblical Theology, i.e. theology as recorded in the Bible; and the third gives us Systematic Theology, i.e. theology arranged and stated systematically as a body of doctrine. We now proceed to consider the various stages of New Testament doctrine, dwelling only on the main outlines.

Doctrine in Development.

First Stage: The Gospels.

A careful study of the four Gospels reveals several consecutive aspects of our Lord's teaching concerning Himself.

1. The Messiahship of Jesus. This is the keynote of the early Judæan ministry (John i.–iv.). We can see it in each part of this section. Our Lord claims to be Messiah in Jerusalem, Judæa, and Samaria.

Then, with the opening of the Galilean ministry, comes a change, and we have

2. The Kingdom of Heaven. This marked the commencement of the ministry (Matthew iv.), and is found in the Sermon on the Mount and the parables of Matthew xiii. Consider the meaning of the Kingdom, its citizens, laws, and results.

Then comes another change, and emphasis is placed on

3. The Person of the Son of God. We notice this as brought about by the miracle of the five thousand, and as strongly marked in the discourses at Capernaum (John vi.), culminating in Peter's Confession (Matthew xvi.) and the Transfiguration (Matthew xvii.).

Again we notice yet another change, and henceforward the stress is laid on

4. The Sufferings and Death of Christ. From the Transfiguration to the Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew xvi. 21 ; Luke ix. 31) this is the dominant note. Then comes another aspect—

5. The Second Advent. From the Sunday to the Thursday evening we find our Lord's parables and general teaching to His disciples almost wholly concerned with the future, His own coming, and the events connected therewith.

In the Upper Room, however, we are conscious of yet another phase—

6. The Dispensation of the Spirit. There the emphasis is not on the Death (it is not once mentioned or even alluded to), or on the great Future, but on the "little while between"—on the period covered by the present dispensation. The teaching of John xiv.–xvii. concerns the disciples, their life and work, with all the privileges, possibilities, and duties of discipleship.

Last of all, we find, after the Resurrection, the crowning aspect—

7. The Great Commission. In all four Gospels and in Acts i. we see how prominent (or rather, predominant) this subject was in the post-Resurrection teaching of our Lord.

Thus in these seven aspects we have a complete view of the teaching of Christ concerning His person and work, His plan of redemption, His purpose of evangelisation, and His prospect of glory and reign.

Second Stage: The Acts.

Starting from the Day of Pentecost and reaching to the arrival of the Apostle Paul in Rome, we have a record of the first thirty years of the Christian Church. As we study the discourses of this book we find three main aspects of teaching stand out distinctly throughout:

1. The Resurrection of Christ. They preached "Jesus and the Resurrection," and so demonstrated the claim of Christ to be God (Acts ii. 24).

2. The Rule of Christ. The practical outcome of Christ's Godhead is His Lordship, His rule over man as King. So they preached the Gospel of the *Kingdom* as the logical conclusion of the Resurrection (Acts ii. 33). Our Lord rose that He might reign (Romans xiv. 9).

3. The Remission of Sins in Christ.

The claim of Christ to Lordship at once brought to light the sad fact that men were not subjects, but rebels by reason of sin, and that before they could have Christ as Lord and be His subjects they must accept Him as Saviour and receive pardon. The gospel of forgiveness was therefore preached as the first step in the process of the enjoyment of redemption (Acts ii. 38).

A careful study of the whole book will reveal these elements of doctrine for unsaved and saved. There are of course subsidiary elements of teaching, but the above-named are primary and essential, and they remind us how the person and work of Christ is to be proclaimed by His people, and how sinners may become saints and saints become servants.

Third Stage: Pauline Epistles.

This gives us the largest section of the New Testament, and the most immediately important for doctrine.

1. We may consider the Epistles in the order of the Authorised Version, which dates from at least the fourth century, if not much earlier. This order gives first the Epistles to (seven) churches, beginning with the longest; then in order of length the Epistles to individuals; and last of all Hebrews, because of the difference of character and destination, and

possibly because of the doubts as to Pauline authorship. Studied in this order, we have—

(*a*) Romans. Doctrinal foundation.

(*b*) Corinthians. Church life.

(*c*) Galatians. Defection and danger.

(*d*) Ephesians. Fuller doctrine for Christian life.

(*e*) Philippians. Christian life illustrated.

(*f*) Colossians. Dangers safeguarded.

(*g*) Thessalonians. The Blessed Hope.

Another grouping of these seven Epistles (in this order) may be seen in Dr. Bullinger's book, *The Church Epistles* (p. 17), and will be found suggestive for comparison.

The Epistles to individuals are mainly personal, and require separate discussion.

2. The Epistles may also be studied chronologically in groups:

(*a*) Group 1. 1 and 2 Thessalonians. The Epistles of the Second Missionary Journey. Eschatological in character. Christ is seen as King. The Grace of Hope is prominent.

(*b*) Group 2. Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans. The Epistles of the Third Journey. Soteriological in character. Christ is seen as Redeemer. The Grace of Faith is prominent.

(*c*) Group 3. Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon. The Epistles of the First Captivity. Christological in character. Christ is seen as Lord. The Grace of Love is prominent.

(*d*) Group 4. 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy. The Epistles of the Release and Second Captivity. Ecclesiastical in character. No new aspect of Christ. Stress is laid on organisation and conduct rather than on doctrine.

The above grouping may be compared with Bishop Lightfoot's plan (*Biblical Essays*, p. 224), who thus characterises each group:

(*a*) The Epistles of the Tribunal, or Christ the Judge.

(*b*) The Epistles of the Cross, or Christ the Redeemer.

(*c*) The Epistles of the Throne, or Christ the Word.

(*d*) The Epistles of the Congregation, or Church Organisation.

Thus we have four groups answering to the "springtime, summer, autumn, and winter of the great Apostle's year" (Beet).

Fourth Stage: St. John's Epistles and Revelation.

This represents the latest type of New Testament doctrine. As Bishop Westcott says, the Gospels and Acts lay the historical foundation, St. Paul gives the logical construction, and St. John supplies the theological completion.

1. The Epistles give his view of life in the present.

2. The Revelation shows his views of glory in the future.

The contributions of St. James, St. Peter, and St. Jude, and the Epistle to the Hebrews cannot be said to represent historical stages so much as particular aspects to be considered in their respective places. St. James' Epistle should be associated with the early Church of Jerusalem (Acts i.–xv.); 1 Peter with the time of and after St. Paul's fourth group of Epistles; 2 Peter and Jude with the time between St. Paul and St. John.

One other fruitful method of the study of doctrine may be mentioned, though it is obvious that it can only be taken quite generally, and must not be pressed into complete detail. It is to study the writings by their authors, especially the Epistles, and to see in St. Paul the Apostle of Faith, St. Peter of Hope, St. John of Love, St. Jude of Truth, and St. James of Duty.

As a guide to this method of study the best book is the one already mentioned in another connexion, Bernard's *Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, of which a second edition has recently been published. Many of our most valued Bible teachers to-day owe much to the first edition of Bernard, published some thirty years ago.

Doctrine as a Whole.

When we have thus gained some idea of the contribution of each period and of each writer to the sum total of Christian doctrine, it remains for us to attempt to gather up the results into one complete whole by arranging the teaching in subjects. The following *conspectus* may be regarded as fairly complete for use as a guide :—

1. God the Father.
2. Christ the Son.
3. The Holy Spirit.
4. Sin.
5. Redemption.
6. The Christian Life.
7. The Future.

Under each of these we may group, with the necessary subdivisions, almost everything in the New Testament. As a single instance of what may be done in this way, let us take one short Epistle, that to the Ephesians, and discover what it teaches about

the Holy Spirit. We shall find at least ten (perhaps twelve) references. We notice first, *Four Facts* about the Work of the Holy Spirit: Sealing, i. 13; Access, ii. 18; Indwelling, ii. 22; Revelation, iii. 5. Then follow *Four Consequences*: Strength, iii. 16; Unity, iv. 3; Sensitiveness, iv. 30; Fulness, v. 18. Lastly come *Two Methods* of maintaining the Holy Spirit's presence: The Sword of the Spirit (God speaking to us), vi. 17; Prayer in the Spirit (we speaking to God), vi. 18. This is but one of many similar possibilities of fruitful and enjoyable study. Bishop Moule's invaluable *Outlines of Christian Doctrine* will be of great service on this whole subject.

We can thus see what fulness, variety, and beauty there are in the New Testament, and how rich the provision made for us, whether for teaching or correction, or for instruction in righteousness. And it is all with the one aim and object "that the man of God may be adjusted, thoroughly fitted for all good works."

CHAPTER XI

MINUTE STUDY

Our studies hitherto have been mainly concerned with the Bible as a whole, and with some of the larger portions and subjects of it. We have been endeavouring to view the landscape in its entirety and enjoy several of its wider views. But the Bible must also be studied more minutely. Not only should we consider the forest ; we should also occupy ourselves with particular trees, and, to continue the simile, with branches, twigs and leaves. The minutest possible study of the Word of God will always prove abundantly fruitful.

It is evident that we can but barely indicate the method and give a few illustrations. The field is vast, and will more than suffice for the longest life of study.

The Study of Verses.

From the study of periods, books, sections, chapters and paragraphs, we descend to the careful consideration of particular verses. It is very important that nothing should be overlooked. Every phrase, every word, and the precise form and mean-

ing of each word should have attention. The true Bible student will cultivate the habit of most careful observation. Who that has worked through one of the Commentaries of Ellicott, or Lightfoot, or Westcott can ever forget the impressions received from these masters of minute observation, or ever fail to thank God for the wonderful light thrown on the most familiar verses by their thorough study of every expression? Bishop Westcott, in a book of suggestions for theological students, laid special stress on the primary need of a grammar and a Concordance for all effectual knowledge of the Word of God. It is remarkable what these alone will produce.

By way of illustration let us take a few verses.

1. Old Testament Verses :—

(*a*) Single verses :—

Psalm lxv. 4 : Four stages of Christian experience—"Chosen, Approaching, Abiding, Satisfied." Consider how each of these is illustrated in the New Testament.

Psalm lxxxi. 10 : Notice here—

(1) The Foundation of Faith. "I am the Lord thy God."

(2) The Encouragement of Faith. "Which . . . Egypt."

(3) The Possibility of Faith. "Open thy mouth wide."

(4) The Satisfaction of Faith. "I will fill it."

(*b*) Successive verses.

Psalm xxv. 6 and 7, Three "Remembers."

Psalm xxx., Sevenfold "Thou hast."

Psalm xxxvi. 5 and 6, Four things concerning God ("Thy"); verses 8 and 9, Four things the believer thinks of God—"Fatness," "River," "Fountain," "Light."

Isaiah vi. 5, 8, 11, "Then said I"—Confession, Consecration, Communion.

(*c*) Contrasted verses.

Psalm xxiii. 2 and 3, the two "leadings" of God.

Psalm xxiv. 4 and xxv. 1, "Lift up."

Psalm xxvi. 1 and 11, "Integrity."

Psalm xxvi. 5 and 8, "Hated," "Loved."

The study of verses in this way can be prosecuted in almost every part of the Old Testament, but space forbids further examples. We now turn to

2. New Testament Verses :—

(*a*) Single—

Philippians iv. 19 : Discover the seven aspects of Grace—(1) the Necessity,

(2) the Source, (3) the Certainty, (4) the Extent, (5) the Means, (6) the Depository, (7) the Proportion.

Matthew xxv. 21 : Service—(1) Relationship, (2) Character, (3) Commendation, (4) Reward.

(*b*) Successive.—Colossians i. 27 and 28 : Our Message, our Methods, our Motive.

Romans v. : Two aspects of Justification (1 and 9), Three causes of Boasting (R. V., 2, 3, 11), Two views of Salvation (9 and 10), Four "reigns" (14, 17, 21), Four "Much more" (9, 10, 15, 17).

(*c*) Contrasted verses.

Mark xiii. 9, 13, 20 : "For My Sake," "For My name's sake," "For the elect's sake."

Luke iii. 22 and iv. 1 : The Holy Spirit "descending" and "filling."

Luke iii. 22 and iv. 3 : "Son of God."

Acts xiii. 4 and 9 : "Sent forth" and "filled"—our *authority* and our *ability* in service.

These represent but the minimum of an inexhaustible method of study.

The Study of Words.

This is one of the most delightful and profitable of studies, and enables us to see the wonderful variety, proportion and balance of the truths of God's Word. One thing is needed for this—a thoroughly good Concordance. It must be "thoroughly good" if it is to be of real service. By this we specially mean accurate and complete. The Concordances usually included in "Teachers' Bibles" are only very partially serviceable because they necessarily omit so much. The genuine Concordance will include all references, and, if possible, will give the parts of the actual text in which the word occurs. Then again, our Authorised Version is very fond of using different English words for the same Hebrew and Greek originals. See John xv., where one Greek word is rendered by "abide," "dwell," "remain," "continue." It is therefore obvious that for accurate word-studies we must have proper guidance. The best Concordances for the purpose are Young's *Analytical* and Strong's *Exhaustive*, the former having for its special purpose the work of distinguishing the Hebrew, Greek, and English words used, The latter Concordance is absolutely complete, and should quite supersede the time-honoured Cruden. The abbreviated editions of Cruden are only useful

for the more important passages. The two books now mentioned are expensive, but they are books for a lifetime and for constant use. It is worth a struggle to buy them. Students of the Greek Testament do not need to be told of Bruder's and Moulton's great works. The latter has by no means superseded the former for those who are not absolutely wedded to the Westcott and Hort Text. A Hebrew Concordance is, of course, a much more serious matter. The "Englishman's" is the most generally serviceable. On the whole, we would say to any student who can afford but one: Get Young's *Analytical Concordance* in the latest edition, and make it a constant companion. It will soon become a treasured friend.

Old Testament Words and Phrases.

Consider the words "meditate" and "meditation," and classify the texts under (1) the Objects, (2) the Times, (3) the Methods, (4) the Results of Meditation.

Look at 1 Chronicles xvi. and Psalm lxxi., and put together the sevenfold "continually."

Study Psalm lxxxvi. for the eightfold "for" in regard to the believer and God.

Collect the occasions where "blessed" occurs in the Psalms, and see the fulness of these Old Testament "beatitudes."

Look at Joshua xxiii., with its twenty-three times of "the Lord your God."

Study the seven things in Ezra vii. which are said to belong to God ("of God").

Collect the references to "Stand still," and notice the call to think, to see, and to hear.

New Testament Words and Phrases.

Find "whatsoever ye do" three times in St. Paul's Epistles.

Consider the six occasions in St. John's writings (Gospel and Epistles) where we read of "joy full" or "fulfilled."

Notice the force of "also" in Luke xvi. 1, linking the parable on to those of chap. xv. and making it an application to the disciples.

See John xviii. 17 for the same word "also," i.e. "thou also"—as well as John, who was bold enough to go in and thereby confess Christ. Note the three references to "unspeakable;" the five or six uses of "Thanks be to God" or "God be thanked," in St. Paul; the four references in St. John's first Epistle to "confidence" or "boldness" (same word—see Young) referring to present and future.

Look at the uses of "adoption," of "regeneration," of "life" (in St. John's Gospel especially). The "overcomes" of Revelation, the "precious" things of St. Peter's Epistles, the aspects of "belief"

in St. John's Gospel, and such words as "abundance," "riches," "abide," "know" are further hints of the wealth of teaching connected with word studies. They are but small samples of a plan of study that should be very frequently adopted.

As an illustration of this method on a more elaborate scale we offer the following word study on

The Calling of God.

Among the important and outstanding words of the New Testament are those found in the group associated with the idea of "calling." Such words are very prominent in the teaching of the Gospels and Epistles, and touch at once on some of the deepest and most practical truths connected with the Christian revelation. This thought of "calling" has several aspects, and there seems to be a distinct progress in the meaning of the word as we read through the New Testament. In the Gospels it appears to be limited to the mere invitation to the sinner (Matthew xxii. 14 and Luke xiv. 7), while in the Epistles it implies also that the invitation has been accepted.

I. The Source of the Calling.

1. The Primal Source. "God" (1 Thessalonians ii. 12; 2 Timothy i. 9).
2. The Mediate Source. "Jesus Christ" (Romans i. 6).

II. The Subjects of the Calling.

1. As to destined scope. Universality (1 Corinthians i. 24).
2. As to spiritual condition. "Sinners" (Luke v. 32).
3. As to Divine estimate. "Vessels of mercy" (Romans ix. 23 and 24).
4. As to actual fact. "Not many wise," etc. (1 Corinthians i. 26).

III. The Purpose of the Calling.

God calls us to "inherit blessing" (1 Peter iii. 9), which includes:

1. Repentance (Luke v. 32).
2. Salvation (2 Thessalonians ii. 13 and 14).
3. Peace (Colossians iii. 15).
4. Light (1 Peter ii. 9).
5. Fellowship (1 Corinthians i. 9).
6. Service (Romans i. 1).
7. Freedom (Galatians v. 13).
8. Holiness (1 Corinthians i. 2).
9. Suffering (1 Peter ii. 20 and 21).
10. Eternal life (1 Timothy vi. 12).
11. Eternal inheritance (Hebrews ix. 15).
12. Eternal glory (1 Peter v. 10; 1 Thessalonians ii. 12; Revelation xix. 9).

IV. The Principles of the Calling.

1. According to Divine purpose (Romans viii. 28).
2. According to Divine grace (2 Timothy i. 9).
3. Not according to human merit (2 Timothy i. 9).

V. The Sphere of the Calling.

1. In the Lord (1 Corinthians vii. 22 ; Philippians iii. 14).
2. In grace (Galatians i. 6).
3. In holiness (1 Thessalonians iv. 7).
4. In peace (1 Corinthians vii. 15).
5. In one body (Colossians iii. 15).

VI. The Means of the Calling.

1. Through the Gospel (2 Thessalonians ii. 14).
2. Through God's grace (Galatians i. 15).
3. Through God's glory (2 Peter i. 3, Greek).
4. Through God's character (2 Peter i. 3, Greek ; 1 Corinthians i. 9).

VII. The Characteristics of the Calling.

1. High (Philippians iii. 14).
2. Holy (2 Timothy i. 9).
3. Heavenly (Hebrews iii. 1).
4. Humbling (1 Corinthians i. 26).

VIII. The Requirements of the Calling.

1. Abide in it (1 Corinthians vii. 20 and 24).
2. Walk according to it (1 Corinthians vii. 17).

3. Walk worthy of it (Ephesians iv. 1).
4. Walk worthy of the Source of it (1 Thessalonians ii. 12).
5. Give diligence to realise it (2 Peter i. 10).

IX. The Incentives of the Calling.

1. Its hope (Ephesians i. 18 [" His "]; Ephesians iv. 4 [" your "]).
2. Its prize (Philippians iii. 14).

X. The Guarantees of the Calling.

1. God's character—faithful (1 Corinthians i. 9; 1 Thessalonians v. 24).
2. God's purpose—irrevocable (Romans xi. 29).
3. God's grace—eternal (Romans viii. 30).

Here, then, is our portion, our privilege, and our prospect. We look back and remember the " darkness " out of which we have been called (1 Peter ii. 9). We look round and " see " our calling (1 Corinthians i. 26) as it concerns our present life. We look forward and pray to " know " the hope of His calling (Ephesians i. 18). And in the light of all this wealth of grace we bow ourselves before God in contrition, adoration and consecration, and trust Him for grace to " walk worthy " (Ephesians iv. 1) of His kingdom on earth, and to be " accounted worthy " (2 Thessalonians i. 11) of the glory that is to be revealed.

CHAPTER XII

THE SUPREME OBJECT OF BIBLE STUDY

Our consideration of various methods of studying the Word of God naturally leads us to the ultimate aim and purpose of all uses of the Bible. For there *is* an ultimate and supreme object in all our association with Scriptures, and one never to be overlooked, still less set aside. This culmination of our study is the devotional use of the Bible, the study of it as the revelation of God to the soul of man. On this subject of the devotional study of Holy Scripture we must notice several points.

Its Special Importance.

The first stage of all study in relation to the Bible is that known as Textual Criticism—the discovery of the true text, the assurance that we have as nearly as is possible for us to obtain them the words of the sacred writers. But this stage of study is obviously only introductory. It is essential as the foundation, but it is only the foundation.

The next stage is that which is known as Literary

Criticism—the study of the Bible as literature, the consideration of its composition, authorship, date, style, and contents. This also is important and essential, for without it we should lose much of the beauty and glory of the Bible. Yet there is something more and better to which we must proceed. The Bible is literature, but it is more, and if we rest content at this stage we shall fail at a vital point.

The third stage of Bible study is concerned with Biblical Exegesis—that is, the true interpretation of the contents of the Bible, the exact meaning of passages, sections and verses. This involves a knowledge of language and grammar, of manners and customs, of literary and rhetorical forms of expression. This is obviously of the greatest moment and imperative of all true study. Still, it is not everything, and it is only too possible to become occupied with details of interpretation, and all the while to be missing the essential spiritual power.

The fourth stage of our work with the Bible is occupied with Biblical Theology—the consideration of the religion revealed in the Scriptures, its doctrines, morals and duties. This is the highest point of Christian scholarship, and it is of the utmost value to be able to see what is the theological teaching of each stage of God's revelation of Himself, from the first days until the time of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet even here we do not get finality; for it is only too possible to be occupied with the intellectual contents of the Bible, to have it all arranged and grasped in our minds, and still to be devoid of the substance and power of the Word of God. The message is "Excelsior!" even here.

Through and above all stages we must press until we arrive at the summit, which is the use of the Bible as God's personal Word to our own souls, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" "What wilt Thou have me to do?" The Scriptures are intended to lead the soul direct to God, to introduce it to His presence, and to convey His revelation of truth and grace. And if we fail to realise this, we fail at the critical point, and all our other knowledge, great and valuable though it be, will count for little or nothing. Bible study above all else is intended to bring and keep the soul in direct contact with God. The highest privilege and holiest possibility of the Christian religion is fellowship with God in Christ, and this is absolutely impossible apart from constant devotional dealings with the Word of God.

Its Spiritual Requirements.

Any one with brains can become an expert in the first four stages of Bible study referred to above. The fifth stage needs qualities and conditions far beyond intellectual capacity and attainment.

The soul must be accepted with God in Christ. Fellowship with God is only possible to a saved soul, to one pardoned and accepted in Christ. Sin must be dealt with before communion is realised, and consequently there can be no genuine devotional study of Scripture apart from the position of a believer in Christ and the assurance of personal salvation. The "natural" man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, or, to take St. Paul's word literally, "does not welcome" them. But, more than this, as the apostle goes on to say, "neither is he able to experience them" (1 Corinthians iii. 14, Greek); he has not the faculty which will enable him to do so. He must be changed into a "spiritual" man, for these things are "spiritually discerned." It is for lack of realisation of this patent and potent fact that so much error is abroad to-day. Men study the Bible without being at all conscious that it demands spiritual as well as intellectual qualifications.

Further, the soul thus accepted in Christ must be kept right with God, if Bible study is to be of the highest and best. The life of the believer must be true to God. The conscience must be kept pure and sensitive; the mind must be kept teachable, self-distrustful, and ever wishful to learn of God; the will must be kept submissive and obedient, and ready to do what God appoints. The secrets of the

Lord are only revealed to "them that fear Him;" for "to this man will I look, even to him that . . . trembleth at My Word." Many a believer finds the Word of God dark to him because he is out of spiritual condition. There is no "open vision" because his soul is not right with God. The devotional study of the Bible is at once a cause and an effect in relation to the spiritual life. It is a cause of increased spiritual vitality, power, insight and blessing, while in turn this spiritual reality of life leads to yet more spiritual revelation of God in His Word. Prayer and Obedience are organs of knowledge, and the more of these the more knowledge. "If any man wills to do . . . he shall know." For spiritual power in life we must use the spiritual food of the Word of God.

Its Simple Methods.

For the devotional and spiritual use of the Word of God there are three rules, but these three, though simple, are all-inclusive.

We must *search* (St. John v. 39). God's thoughts are never revealed to listless readers, but only to eager searchers. The glories of the Scriptures are not to be discovered without diligent search. The Bible is like a mine, and its jewels are not to be picked up on the roadside. It affords opportunity

for thought, and requires its exercise. Its words, phrases and sentences are full of meaning and power. Like our Lord's parables, the Bible at once conceals and reveals its message. Strenuous thought is imperative if we would obtain from the Word ths blessing it contains. We must ponder its statements, dwell on its meaning, grasp its message, and dwell lovingly and earnestly on its revelation of God in Christ. Nothing in it is without some purpose, and what this is, the Lord will reveal in response to His servants' faithful search.

We must *meditate* (Joshua i. 8; Psalm i. 2). "Meditation" comes from a Greek word meaning "to attend," and this is essentially the idea of Bible meditation. It is reading with attention. More than this, it is reading with intention. It is concerned at each point with personal application. And it must be our own thought, our own musing, our own application. Look well at this text, made as clear as the printer's art can emphasise its teaching: "MY meditation of HIM" (Psalm civ. 34). "My" meditation, not merely some one else's. The great, the primary, the essential point is *first-hand* meditation on God's Word as the secret of Christian living.

Dr. Andrew Murray has reminded us in one of his books that milk represents food which has already passed through digestive processes before it is taken

by us. And so we may say that all the little books of devotion, the helps to holiness, the series of manuals of thought and teaching, however valuable, represent food that has passed through the spiritual digestion of others before it comes to us, and it has to be used as such. Do we then decry all these? Far from it; yea, we establish them, but only in their place and for their purpose. If they are put first, to the exclusion of the Bible alone, and the Bible day by day, they become dangerous and disastrous, crutches that prevent vigorous exercise, and lead to spiritual senility. If they are put second, they become delightful and valuable, inspirations to further thought and pathways to deeper blessings. When we have had our own meditation of the Word we are the better able to enjoy what God teaches us through others of His children, and especially those whom God honours with special gifts of teaching. So it must be first, foremost and constantly, "MY meditation of HIM."

Meditation must be real. It must be "the meditation of my heart" (Psalm xlix. 3), and "the heart" in Scripture means the centre of the moral being, which includes the intellect, the emotions, and the will. It implies that we come to the Word to be searched thoroughly, guided definitely, and strengthened effectually. The hour of meditation is not a time for dreamy, vague imaginings, but for living,

actual blessing, whether in the form of guidance, warning, comfort, or counsel.

Meditation will also be practical. What are its stages or elements? *First*, the careful reading of the particular passage or subject, thinking over its real and original meaning. *Next*, a resolute application of it to my own life's needs, conscience, heart, mind, imagination, will; finding out what it has to say to *me*. *Next*, a hearty turning of it into prayer for mercy and grace, that its teaching may become part of my life. *Next*, a sincere transfusion of it into a resolution that my life shall reproduce it. *Lastly*, a whole-hearted surrender to, and trust in, God for power to practise it forthwith, and constantly throughout the day. It is to be noted that the word "meditate," in our English version, represents two Hebrew words—one meaning to "muse" or "think," and the other implying "speech," or audible thinking (Psalm v. 1). These two elements should always be blended—thinking over the Word, its meaning, its application, its message, and then talking to God about it, in confession of the past failures, in prayer for future blessing, in fellowship in present joys or needs. Thus will meditation become so practical, so vital, so blessed, that we shall find in it our chief joy, and our indispensable daily power for service.

We must *compare* (1 Corinthians ii. 13). God's

Word is like a kaleidoscope with many combinations. In addition to our search and meditation of one particular passage, we must compare passages together, in order to arrive at the full meaning of the Word which has been given to us in "many parts and many manners" (Hebrews i. 1). The various aspects of truth are thus seen in their entirety and proportion, and our spiritual life becomes fully informed and completely equipped. There are so many topics or subjects scattered throughout God's Word, that only as we collect and compare them can we appreciate the fulness and glory of God's revelation.

In illustration of this let us take two or three examples out of many. It is only by this method of comparison that we can arrive at the full truth of the doctrine of justification in its sixfold aspect. God the Author (Romans iii. 26); Grace the Source (Romans iii. 24); Blood the Ground (Romans v. 9); Resurrection the Acknowledgment (Romans iv. 25); Faith the Channel (Romans v. 1); and Works the Fruit (James ii. 24).

Again, the Will of God is the centre of all life, but it is only as we start with Matthew and go through the New Testament, collecting all the passages about the will of God, that we can realise the wondrous fulness and glory of His claim on us. Once more, when we turn to the Old Testament it is essential to institute comparisons of the various

titles of God, if we would discover the complete meaning of His relation to us. An illustration of this can be seen in Prebendary Webb-Peploe's book on *The Titles of Jehovah*, presenting the various aspects of God's revelation to the believer.

Many more instances of the necessity of this comparison might be given ; indeed, there is scarcely any truth in the Word of God that can be fully understood by one passage alone. We *must* compare. It need only be added that very much helpful and " sane " spiritualising is possible by this method, as, for instance, by comparing the mountains of the Bible and their spiritual associations, or the valleys, or the " windows." Or we might take such a phrase as the " all things " of the Scripture and see how " all things are of God " ; " all things are yours " ; " all things are for your sakes " ; " all things work together for good." The possibilities of this method are almost endless.

For this method we need a good concordance and a good reference Bible. There are references which do not refer ! Hence the need of discrimination. The recent edition of the Revised Version, with its entirely new set of references, is far and away the best, though the references in other editions are often valuable.

All that has been said may be summed up in the words of Job : " I have esteemed the words

of His mouth more than my necessary food;" and of Jeremiah: "Thy words were found and I did eat them;" and of the Psalmist: "How sweet are Thy words to my taste!" The Bible must be our daily food if we are to be strong and vigorous. Not quantity, but quality, determines the nutritive value of food. What we must emphasise is capacity to receive, power to assimilate, and readiness to reproduce. As some one has well put it, the process is threefold—infusion, suffusion, transfusion.

The Word thus becomes all-sufficient and all-powerful in our life—the mirror to reveal (James i.); the water to cleanse (Ephesians v.); the milk to nourish (1 Peter ii.); the strong meat to invigorate (Hebrews v.); the honey to delight (Psalm cxix.); the fire to warm (Jeremiah xxiii.); the hammer to break and fasten (Jeremiah xxiii.); the sword to fight (Ephesians vi.); the seed to grow (Matthew xiii.); the lamp to guide (Psalm cxix.); the statute-book to legislate (Psalm cxix.); and the gold to treasure in time and for eternity (Psalm xix.).

CHAPTER XIII

THE STUDENT'S TWO BIBLES

Two Bibles are essential to all Bible study. One is not sufficient, and without two we are liable to lose a great deal of blessing.

The Bible for Knowledge.

By this is meant Bible study in general, and the processes and methods of Bible knowledge and information. We ought to have one Bible specially, if not exclusively, devoted to intellectual study.

Knowledge must be gained—gained first by personal study. There are two methods of Bible study that should be prosecuted, if at all possible, side by side. One is the steady progress right through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, taking God's Word as we have received it. For this purpose it is distinctly useful to belong to some organisation which follows this method. The oldest, and parent of the rest, is the Bible and Prayer Union (Mrs. Richardson, St. Benet's, Stepney, London, E.). This takes one chapter a day, from Genesis to

Revelation, and reads the Bible through in about three years and a quarter. Or there is the Christian Progress Scripture Reading and Prayer Union (Miss Boys, 34 and 35, Paternoster House, Paternoster Row, E.C.). Members read daily one chapter of the Old Testament, and a short evening portion of the New Testament, while associates read the New Testament only. Again, there is the plan adopted by the "College by Post," which affords help and guidance to students. Full particulars can be obtained from the admirable book already noticed in an earlier chapter, *Clews to Holy Writ.*

Side by side with this regular general reading through the Bible, there should be, if possible, special study of some book or period, but particularly of the New Testament. If any one will take the Calendar of the English Prayer Book, the reading of the Second Lesson each day will cover the New Testament in one year, with the exception of a few chapters in the Revelation. Or we might give three or six months to one book and do our best to master it. In any case there should be system and method, and perseverance therein.

In this study of the Bible it is essential that we should be definite in our work, and that we do not merely read, but think. For example, when we have our chapter or section before us it is well for us to ask ourselves, What is my purpose in

this study? What is it that I am going to do? Then we might go on to ask ourselves some or all of these questions:

1. Do I understand the meaning of the words and phrases of the passage? (Never hesitate to confess the need of a dictionary.) In Exodus ii. "to wit," "ark," "flags" are instances.

2. What persons and places are mentioned? Do these occur elsewhere in Scripture? (This means history and geography.)

3. Are there any allusions to Eastern manners and customs needing elucidation? (The Bible is such an Oriental book that many passages can only be properly understood in the light of Eastern life.)

4. What marginal references to other passages need attention? (Scripture wonderfully interprets Scripture.)

5. Is there any special doctrinal teaching on God, Christ, the Spirit, sin, grace, holiness, eternity? (See the chapter on doctrinal study.)

6. When reading in the New Testament, consider whether there is anything about the Old Testament? Or if in the Old Testament, am I reminded by it of anything in the New Testament?

7. Is there anything typical or prophetic in it?

We gain knowledge, too, from Bible classes and from books on the Bible. Contact with other minds

cannot fail to increase our store of knowledge. But we are now concerned first and foremost with our own personal study, and with our own study of the Bible as distinct from books on the Bible. Many more helps might have been suggested, but we have been anxious to urge the student to go direct to the Word first, and to be occupied with that mainly and primarily. We must thoroughly grasp its contents, discover its meaning, and receive its message as far as possible by immediate contact with its pages.

Knowledge must be gathered. How may we best store the results of our study? First, by means of a Bible with margins or interleaved pages. There is a cheap Bible with a very wide margin (Cambridge Press) admirably adapted for notes, and it is published in some at least of the separate books. Into this should be put all our "finds" and the other results of study. In this connexion may be mentioned Bible-marking. Mrs. Menzies' *How to Mark your Bible*, and Mr. Wells' *The Bible Marksman*, will prove suggestive. We would only urge great care about underlining and "railways," lest the Bible text become overloaded with such marks and its clearness almost obliterated. For thorough and minute Bible-marking one Bible should be devoted solely to the plan adopted.

There will, however, be many a note or extract

that cannot well be put in the margin of a Bible. For these we need a note-book, which we can arrange and index in such a way as to be easily available. The Note-Books published by Eason, Mid-Abbey Street, Dublin, are useful for this purpose, though almost any book will suffice. It is best to index by subject and by text, and put the number of the page of the note-book opposite the text in the margin of the Bible. Reference at any time thus becomes easy. In some such ways we may gather and garner the results of our study.

The Bible for Power.

By this we mean the use of the Bible for spiritual life and power. And here we wish to emphasise in the strongest way the necessity and importance of having a separate Bible for devotional purposes alone, quite apart from the Bible for general study. Further, we urge the imperative necessity of this devotional Bible being kept *entirely free from marks*. We need to have a fresh message from God every day, and if we open our marked Bible for this we are almost certain to find our thoughts running in the groove of former messages suggested by our marks and notes. It is only a very strong and detached mind that can overcome this tendency, and hence it is far better to have a Bible with a clear page which allows the mind to be untrammelled in seeking its

new message. Then when the new message comes we can register any results in our Bible for notes. We venture to plead earnestly for this. The fruit of it will be abundant. Let this Bible be one with a good print, for it will last a lifetime and become "a little sanctuary."

In this devotional study let us ever beware of reading the Bible with an eye to our work. How great is the temptation to a worker to read with a view to sermons or classes! We must read it for ourselves first of all, and for no one else.

And this devotional study should become the very habit of our life. Our personal and direct contact with the Word of God will be an exact test of our discipleship and character. The Bible is the mirror, in which we see ourselves as we are and as God sees us, and it must be evident that if we never use, or rarely use the mirror, we cannot be sure of our real state before God. Christianity is largely a matter of the condition of soul; stress is laid on character, and character is power. Now character requires solitude for growth; solitude is "the mother-country of the strong"; but solitude without the Bible tends towards morbidity, while with the Bible it is a guarantee of vitality and vigour. Let us then be sure that amid the hurry and worry of life we "take time to be holy" by means of meditation on God in His Word. Not even Christian work must rob us

of this secret of true service and blessing. The superficiality of many lives warns us "to give heed to reading," "to meditate on these things," that "our profiting may appear to all," and at the same time glorify God.

The following suggestions are offered for this devotional study :—

1. Open all such occasions with prayer for the Holy Spirit's light (Psalm cxix. 18).

2. Ask to be guided to some definite thought for *yourself*.

3. Dwell prayerfully on this thought thus given —Is it a counsel ? A precept ? A warning ? A promise ? An experience ? A command ?

4. When its meaning is clear, use it as the basis of a prayer for grace to realise it in experience.

5. Yield the whole soul in full surrender to its truth and power.

6. Link it on to truths already known, and thereby strengthen the chain of experience.

7. Trust God to reproduce it in your life that day.

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to do more than call attention to the intimate and necessary connexion between prayer and all Bible study, whether the study be mainly critical or purely devotional. Bible knowledge is at once a cause and an effect of prayer. We need prayer for spiritual and intellectual en-

lightenment before and as we study the Word of God, while the results of our study will in turn lead to more prayer and increasing waiting on God in fellowship. Thus the two act and react on each other, for prayer in its simplest definition is just our speaking to God, and the Bible is God speaking to us. These two combined constitute true fellowship, that intimate friendship which is the very crown and culmination of God's revelation in Christ in relation to human life (1 John i. 3).

We have now come to the end of these chapters on Bible Study. They have of course only touched the fringe of a vast subject, but perhaps sufficient has been suggested to show the wonderful treasure we possess in the Word of God, and how great is the need and value of thorough, earnest, sustained study. Further help in the way of practical hints may be obtained from *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, by the Rev. R. A. Torrey; *Searching the Bible Mine*, by H. Hankinson (specially suited to educated young people); and an *Introduction to the Devotional Study of Holy Scripture*, by Dean Goulburn. If these and all similar works are used aright, and not allowed to do for us what we ought to do for ourselves, they will fulfil their mission by sending us to the Bible itself and compelling us to think over

and grasp its contents and apply its truth to our daily life. The end of all Bible study is information and inspiration, and it cannot be too often stated that we shall never realise this unless we give ourselves to the Bible first and foremost, and not to books about the Bible. For fulness of experience, for reality of character, for clearness of testimony, and for effectiveness of service, there is nothing to compare with definite daily Bible study and meditation. Then shall we "make our way prosperous, and then shall we have good success." "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be adjusted, thoroughly fitted for all good works."

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